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A TREATISE

ON

INFANT BAPTISM;

SHEWING

THE SCRIPTURAL GROUNDS

AND

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF THAT ORDINANCE;

TOGETHER WITH

A BRIEF EXPOSITION

OF THE

Baptismal Offices of the Church of England.

BY THE

REV. JAMES ROBERTSON, A. M.

MISSIONARY FROM THE VENERABLE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN FOREIGN PARTS.

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TO THE

HONBLE. AND RIGHT REVEREND

JOHN INGLIS, D. D.

LORD BISHOP OF NOVA-SCOTIA,

THE FOLLOWING TREATISE

IS

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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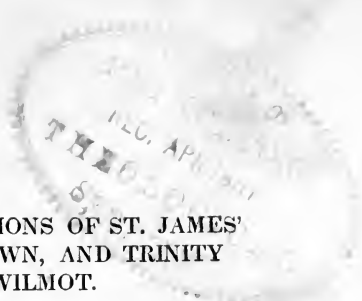
ERRATA.

Page 15, line 21, for "advantage," read "advantages."
" 123, " 28, for "1" read "4;" for "2," read "5."
" 123, " 29, for "4," read "1;" for "5," read "2."
" 161, " 6, for "their," read "his."
" 215, " 18, for "Ionè," read "Inè."
" 231, " 25, for "last," read "least."
" 249, " 33, for "Lecker," read "Secker."

*** The learned reader is requested to correct several Greek errata in pages 81, 104, and 137.



TO THE CONGREGATIONS OF ST. JAMES' CHURCH, BRIDGETOWN, AND TRINITY CHURCH, WILMOT.

My Christian Brethren,

THE subject of the following Treatise is one which cannot fail to engage the attention of every Christian. It involves interests and consequences which must ever be of the highest importance to all, who look for light and immortality through the Gospel. It concerns the administration of one of the Sacraments of our most holy religion,—is connected with the due performance of a most sacred duty,—and has a close reference to the means of grace and the hope of glory.

It was from a sense of the great importance of the Baptismal ordinance in these respects, that the present attempt to explain it on scriptural and historical grounds has been undertaken. A controversy, begun and conducted under circumstances which must still be fresh in the recollection of most of you, has of late attracted general attention to this subject throughout the Province. I am not sure indeed that controversy forms the best possible chan-

nel for communicating instruction; but it may, nevertheless, prove to be of some advantage. It may rouse a spirit of enquiry, which otherwise might remain inactive; and may lead to a course of investigation, which will ultimately terminate in the most satisfactory results. A difficulty may be overcome; a doubt may be solved; and a definite opinion may be established. But notwithstanding these advantages, that may attend controversial discussion, I would not wish you to be impressed with the idea, that the following sheets have been published for the purpose of continuing or taking a part in them. My sole object is to put it in your power to judge for yourselves, and to form an opinion of your own, respecting the chief matters in debate.

With this view I have traced, as briefly as is compatible with perspicuity, the history of the various controversies that have at different times agitated the christian church, with regard to the Sacrament of Baptism; endeavouring to point out such general features in the character of the question, at different stages of its progress, as appeared deserving of your notice. And being well convinced that the word of God, in so far as it elucidates the subject, is the best possible arbiter in that, as well as

in all other controverted points, I have referred you chiefly to its declarations. In doing so, I viewed the Bible as a whole, and admitted the authority of the Old Testament, where it seemed to explain or throw light upon the text of the New: because they are both of equal value in making known to mankind the will of God. The general tendency of the great doctrines of human redemption, I have also endeavoured to point out in connection with infant Baptism, and thence to deduce a strong argument in its favour. Lastly, I attempted to illustrate the Baptismal offices of the church of England, by reference to texts of Scripture; shewing that she inculcates nothing in this Sacrament, but what is fully supported by the word of God.

This view of the matter will, I sincerely hope, assist you in your endeavours to arrive at a definitive conclusion, on a subject which cannot but be interesting to you all. I am well aware of the influence of public opinion, and of that degree of sanction, which any cause may derive from the authority of numbers. But I know that I should be doing great injustice to your discrimination, were I to assert that you are swayed by any opinion but that of Scripture, in matters which concern the welfare, spiritual

and eternal, of yourselves and your children. It is the glory of our Church that she forces or constrains no man's judgment. She appeals to the Scriptures as her charter,—bids all her members to compare her ritual and observances, with that sure model,—and permits them to make the inevitable inference themselves; namely, that her whole superstructure is built upon a rock, and that that rock is Christ. All within her pale have thus great cause to rejoice in the security of the Zion in which they are fortified; well persuaded that through God's protecting care, her bulwarks though often assailed, will not be cast down, and that she will ever afford a calm retreat from the strife and contention, which distract those around her.

Permit me to observe however that it is possible to carry this feeling of security beyond its legitimate bounds. Nay I am not certain that it has not been rather too much indulged with regard to the subject of this Treatise. People who have been brought up in the bosom of the Church of England, are in the habit of looking upon infant Baptism, as a point of faith which can admit of no controversy: they therefore are apt to dismiss the subject from their thoughts, and to take no notice of those grounds upon which it rests, as on a sure foundation. The

consequence is that, should they at any time be called on to give a reason for the hope that is in them, and to shew the authority of their church for her practice in this particular, they would necessarily feel themselves rather at a loss as to what answer they should return. During their silence, arguments on the opposite side of the question would be brought forward, and put in the most prominent light; causing doubts to arise in their minds, and presenting difficulties which would all disappear on a closer investigation. Instead however of making such investigation as may lead to a clear and comprehensive view of the whole subject, they allow their imagination to carry them away, and to guide them to the conclusion that Infant Baptism is not Scriptural.

I do not say that such has actually been the case with any of your number; but I do affirm that indifference or want of attention to the principles on which our Church establishes her doctrines and tenets with regard to this particular, has an invariable tendency to these results. You owe it then as a duty to the Church, in which you have been spiritually nurtured, "*to go round about her and to tell the towers thereof, to mark well her bulwarks and to consider her palaces, that God may be your God forever and ever, and may be your guide even unto death.*"

Still " *the kingdom of God cometh not with observation ; it is within you.*" It is not in the observance of outward ceremonies, or in the strict adherence on every occasion to outward forms, that we must seek for proof that this kingdom has come among us, unless we bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and shew by our lives and conversation that we have been renewed in the spirit of our minds. For this reason allow me to guard you particularly from falling into a common mistake of attaching more importance to any outward observance than it justly claims in the scale of christian duties, and as a means of Salvation. Those who think differently from us on this subject, are, I am well aware, of another opinion; and appear in not a few instances, to regard the administration of *adult* baptism to be the chief essence of religion. But I have no hesitation in saying, and I have no doubt that you will join with me in thinking, that to insist upon one distinguishing doctrine, which all admit to be open to discussion, as a point of faith, and to give it a prominence which the Scriptures withhold from it, savours too much of party spirit, and tends to destroy the balance of Christian duties and ordinances, which have been established upon a sure and eternal foundation, by the blessed

author of human redemption. Of the truth of this assertion every one may be satisfied, who reflects well on the admirable proportion, existing between all the parts of the Christian superstructure. Magnify one duty, or diminish another beyond the proportion assigned to them in Scripture, and the whole fabric will appear disdistorted and out of order.

This shews us the great necessity there is, that all the friends of the Church, should endeavour as much as in them lieth to preserve inviolate her admirable ritual and rubrics. For the slightest deviation, in any particular, more especially in the subject matter of the following Treatise, may be attended with the most serious consequences. The opinions of the world we know are changeable; but the word of God remaineth forever. The book of Common Prayer, which in its language and doctrines has been in accordance with Scripture, three hundred years ago, is still in accordance with it. The character of this coincidence and agreement cannot be changed: it will remain the same as long as truth and religion will continue in the world. Be assured therefore that every deviation from the directions of our incomparable Liturgy, regarding the administration of the Christian Sacraments, must inevitably be considered as a wilful neglect of wise and holy counsels.

Moreover permit me in conclusion to exhort you to live charitably with all men. For it does not become a fellow mortal, himself encompassed with many infirmities, to arrogate the privilege of passing judgment, or it may be censure, on the religious tenets of another. The Apostle indeed says: "*Brethren if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.*" James V.—19. 20. But then in doing so, great discretion is necessary: and a want of it would in most instances render the matter worse than it it was before. As a general rule perhaps it would be the safest, and therefore the most eligible mode in the present state of public feeling, to refrain altogether from religious disputation, with any denomination that may differ from our Church; and to cherish in your breasts, pure and untarnished, those true and elevated principles of religion, which afforded comfort and support to many generations gone by, which still console the humble and sincere believer with the prospects of a glorious immortality, and which render the Church of England a bright and a brilliant star among the Institutions of Christendom. Sincerity you are

aware is manifested, not by loud professions, and earnest declamation, but by a steady and silent practice of all we know and believe to our souls' health. Be not therefore over anxious to chide others for their religious creed; but rather give heed to exhibit the beauty and attractions of your own, by a consistent course of conduct in the world, and by promoting by every means within your reach peace, charity, and good will, among all the Israel of God.

Finally it may be well to apprize you that in the following chapters the term *Baptists*, *Anabaptists* and *Antipœdobaptists*, are used indifferently to denote those who oppose the baptism of Infants, and *affirm* that adult baptism is the only Christian Baptism. Those again who receive Infant baptism as a Christian ordinance, and among whom Church people reckon themselves, are denominated by the term *Pœdobaptists*. It only remains that I beg of you, to excuse any errors or mistakes that may have crept into the text; the whole having been composed amid the various duties and avocations of an extensive and laborious mission.

That the perusal of this treatise may tend to confirm your faith, and to advance your

spiritual welfare, is the sincere and fervent prayer of

Your faithful friend and
Affectionate Pastor,
JAMES ROBERTSON.

Bridgetown, March 8th, 1836.

A

TREATISE ON BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORY OF THE BAPTISMAL CONTROVERSY.

SECTION I.

DIFFERENT OPINIONS ON THE SUBJECT IN THE EARLY AGES OF THE CHURCH.

A controversial spirit has by many Christians been deemed inconsistent with the design and tendency of the Gospel, whose professed object is to promote peace and good will amongst mankind. For this reason they may have frequently considered it as an evil to be avoided, rather than a subject of enquiry, which demanded their attention, and courted their most serious investigation. Experience may have taught them that differences of opinion on religious subjects, instead of bringing forth their legitimate fruits of further knowledge and superior enlightenment concerning the things of God, have been the unhappy cause

of family disputes and acrimonious feelings, which ought never to find a place within the Christian heart. Thus they have discarded the idea of entering on controverted ground, both from a preconceived opinion that the enquiry would lead to no profitable result, and from motives of prudent caution, arising from an unwillingness to disturb the peace of the Redeemer's fold.

This, however, is the unfavourable side of the picture. There is another aspect in which it can be viewed to more advantage, and in which points that might otherwise have been deemed deformities, will appear to be of prominent excellence. Our blessed Lord had assured his followers that he came not in the first instance to send peace on earth, but a sword, —that he came to set the father against the son and the son against the father, and the daughter against her mother,—and that a man's enemies should be they of his own household. These gloomy and unpromising predictions were, as we well know, literally fulfilled in the three first centuries of the Christian era. But we know also that the occurrence of the events thus predicted, led under divine Providence to the most glorious results. We know that however severe and trying the ordeal may have been, it was one of the means by which the Gospel has been promoted in the world. And thus we are reconciled to view the suffering and anguish and mental pain, and unhappiness, which may have resulted from this source, as a medium in the hands of God for promoting the ultimate welfare of mankind.

Such is precisely the view in which the christian and sincere enquirer after religious truth, ought to

contemplate the causes and consequences of Theological Controversy. Under unskilful management it may be the cause of severing the bonds of friendship, and of generating feelings of acrimony, bitterness and irreconcilable hatred. In this way it may produce much unhappiness. Yet this evil is only temporary, and may be avoided altogether by the exercise of christian charity and forbearance; whilst the good that may result from a minute enquiry into those sources to which universal reference is made for the support of religious opinions, will include advantages of various descriptions. Among many that might be enumerated let us mention one or two.

An enquiry into a disputed point of religious doctrine, conducted in the spirit of piety and godly humility, will enable one to form an independent judgment of his own, by which his future views will be invariably guided. He will leisurely review the arguments brought forward on either side of the question in debate: these he will have an opportunity of properly estimating according to his own past knowledge and experience; and after mature deliberation, he can decide for that opinion, which to him appears most conformable to Scripture, reason and antiquity.

An enquiry of this nature will again lead to a permanency and stability of opinion in regard to religious matters, from which arises in no immaterial degree the Christian's joy and peace in believing. By personal investigation he has considered the various bearings of a particular subject: it is henceforth a settled point with him. And consequently he is no longer troubled with any of those doubts and misgivings of conscience, which weaken the resolution and tempt the faith of many believers in the Gospel.

When these and such like favourable results follow, as natural consequences, from the controversial agitation of any doctrinal point, we can no longer wonder that disputes of this nature have always, from the earliest times, existed in the Church of Christ. The holy followers of our Lord, and their immediate successors in the ministry of the word, rather courted than avoided disputation, when they perceived that any advantage would thus result to the sacred cause in which they had engaged. The objections which were advanced against the truth by its enemies, had invariably met with ready answers, both in the times of the Apostles and their successors; answers, which tended not only to the elucidation of the truth, as it is in Jesus, but to the confirming and strenthening in the faith, many who might otherwise have been inclined to withhold from it their assent.

The first time that Baptism appears to have been the subject of these religious disputations, happened towards the close of the second century. A heresy had at that time, or somewhat previously, entered into the church: it was called the Valentinian heresy, from Valentinus its author. He was an Egyptian by birth, and had many followers, who were subdivided into a variety of sects. One of them, the *Arconticks*, among many other errors and absurdities, rejected the Sacrament of Baptism altogether, alleging as their reason, that the doctrines which its performance implied were incompatible with the philosophical principles of their great leader Archon. Tertullian, who had lately become a convert to Christianity, and was well versed in the Gnostic and Valentinian philosophy, undertook to refute the errors of these human systems of religion;

and among other things, to impart to the people correct notions, with regard to the importance and dignity of the Sacrament of Baptism. The arguments which he brought forward are eloquently stated and made to bear on the subject in hand with great force; —a circumstance from which may be inferred that he was a master of the learning of his time, and that he employed all his faculties and energy in upholding and illustrating the doctrines of the cross.

The opinion of this Father on the subject of Baptism is considered in modern times to be of much importance; inasmuch as he is supposed to have been acquainted not only with the opinion of the Apostles in that particular, but also with the custom of the early Christians. I will therefore state his opinion as I find it epitomized out of his treatise *De Baptismo*,— Cap. 18—by the learned *Du Pin*. "What necessity is there, saith he, to expose sureties to the hazard of answering for those whom they hold at the fonts, seeing they may be disabled by death from performing their promises which they have made for the children, or else may be disappointed, by their evil inclinations? Jesus Christ says indeed—'*Hinder not little children from coming to me*:'—Let them therefore come to him as soon as they are advanced in years, when they come to learn, and may be taught whither they are going: let them be made Christians, when they become able to know Jesus Christ. What is there to compel this innocent age to receive Baptism? And seeing they are not yet allowed the disposal of temporal goods, is it reasonable that they should be entrusted with the concerns of heaven?"

From this extract the attentive reader will easily deduce the three following inferences. First, that Tertul-

lian advocated the dignity and importance of this Sacrament against the imputations of the enemies of the Gospel: Secondly,—that infant Baptism was in his time regularly administered in the Church by those who are generally known under the designation of the Orthodox party: and thirdly,—that for reasons which he distinctly states, he imagines this sacrament would have been attended with better results, were it administered to adults only. This latter principle he strenuously advocates, but I cannot discover any proof that he ever carried it into practice. On the contrary we are assured by a very competent authority* "that Tertullian had this fancy of baptizing a child to save it."

But that my readers may be enabled to form some estimate of the qualifications of this writer for making or suggesting any improvement in the mode of administering a Sacrament, which he found established among the Christians, I will here set down a few particulars illustrative of his general character.

Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus, was the Son of a centurion under the Roman Proconsul of Africa: he was born at Carthage, about the year of our Lord 160. Of heathen parentage, he was of course brought up in heathen education: going through the regular routine of the dogmatic philosophy which distinguished his time. His natural parts were admirable: and he soon mastered the whole circle of the sciences,—Geometry, natural philosophy, poetry, speculative philosophy, and history. And Eusebius tells us—Lib. II. Chap. 2—that he was profoundly versed in the intricacies of Roman legislation: a fact which

* Dr. Barlow, as quoted by Wall.

will be sufficiently apparent to any careful reader of his works.

Concerning the motives and manner of his conversion, neither himself nor the ancients have handed down to us any certain information. He appears however, to have embraced the faith of Christ with all sincerity: taking every opportunity to promote its interests, and to inculcate its doctrines: whilst his own life and conversation showed a strict conformity to the pure doctrines which he taught. But it will always be a matter of regret, no less than a proof of the weakness of human nature, to the modern soldier of Christ, to consider that this champion of the faith forsook his early pretension to religion, and fell into many of those grievous errors which, as I began by stating, at that time distracted the Church. He fell into the errors of the Montanists, who adopted the opinions of the heathen Philosopher Plato, and most absurdly mixed up the doctrines of men with the doctrines of God. But the same love of novelty in speculative doctrines, which drove him from the communion of the Orthodox party, impelled him soon after to forsake the followers of Montanus, and to pursue without control or restraint, the vagaries of a vivid, but misguided imagination. When he perceived that he was opposed by his former disciples, he opened a place of worship in his native city of Carthage, where, separated from every communion of Christians then known, he taught and illustrated his own peculiar notions. In this manner he became the founder of a sect which flourished in that city until St. Augustine's time.

Soon after, however, his long and busy life came to a close. He died about the 246th year of our era, being

probably ninety years of age. His character is thus drawn by the Author of "*the lives of the most eminent fathers of the Church*"—Vol. I. p. 104: "He was one of a great wit, in which St. Jerome says, he had no superior, but seemed too satirical in treating his adversaries. His style was for the most part short and obscure, but yet at the same time, sublime and masculine, carrying a commanding and majestic eloquence along with it. In short, his excellencies were almost without comparison, which made his declension to Montanism the more to be lamented."

From this brief sketch of the life of Tertullian, the candid reader will discover many reasons for doubting his authority as an infallible oracle in the Church. His powers of mind were extremely versatile: and to this cause, perhaps, we ought to attribute that love of novelty and philosophical speculation, which began to be manifested in his opinions concerning baptism, and finally drove him from every christian communion. There is the more consideration due to these particulars; because he is the first among the Fathers who advocates, as we have seen, the principles of adult baptism. We are not informed—at least I could discover no information on the subject—whether his followers had decided, after his death, to practice adult baptism, or whether they looked upon it merely as the abstract opinion of their founder. One thing however is certain. The doctrine in question met with the most indiscriminate reprobation from the more numerous and orthodox party: and this, every candid enquirer after truth will readily admit, to be sufficient authority for attesting the general sense of primitive times with regard to adult baptism, as a ceremony of universal observation.

It will have been observed that the character of the controversy just noticed is very different from that which distinguishes the disputations of modern Theologians on the subject of Baptism. Archon had denied the use of Baptism as a Sacrament altogether. Tertullian answered him, and vindicated the authority and advantages of that sacred ordinance. But in the course of this vindication he ventured some opinions peculiar to himself, which not only met with the disapproval of his fellow presbyters, but even caused his separation from their communion. And thus, so far as I can discover, the matter was permitted to rest.

SECTION 2.

THE CARTHAGINIAN CONTROVERSY.

The next controversy with regard to the Sacrament of Baptism, of which ecclesiastical history takes notice, is one of more importance, both in its nature and consequences, than that which we have just discussed. It was conducted by men to whose learning and piety the voice of antiquity bears the amplest testimony, and whose names are still revered among those who admire the union of the most unfeigned humility, with the loftiest sentiments of piety, and the most fervent zeal for the prosperity of the Gospel. These were Stephen, Bishop of Rome, and Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. The controversy in question arose out of the following circumstances.

Amidst the great variety of opinions which began, about the middle of the third century, to be held by people who called themselves christians,—opinions

which were any thing but conformable to the spirit and design of the Gospel—it became a question among the true followers of Christ, as to what degree of validity they might attach to ordinances, that were celebrated by persons, who, by the philosophical tendency of their speculation, had separated themselves from the great body of professing christian. Hence arose the important enquiry—whether persons baptized in their youth by Schismatics could be received into the communion of the true Church without re-baptization, in conformity with the fundamental principles of christianity? The Bishops of Numidia in particular, wished for a just and scriptural solution of this question; and accordingly applied to Cyprian, who was then Bishop of Carthage, and in whose decision they engaged to acquiesce. This eminent man decided in the negative, and decreed that no Baptism performed by a heretic or Schismatic could be valid. It was further understood that every person, who had renounced the errors of any particular sect or schism, and had expressed a desire to join himself unto the true Church, should be re-baptized. In a council, which was convened at Carthage in the year 256, these decisions of Cyprian were confirmed, and henceforth regulated the opinion of the African Church on this subject.

Stephen was then Bishop of Rome. No sooner was the decision of the African Council known, than he received intelligence of it, with a request from the members who composed it, that he would introduce a similar discipline into the Church over which he presided. But the Roman Bishop was so far from complying with this request, that he used, in a very unceremonious manner, the deputies who preferred

it. He both excommunicated them, and denied them the rights of hospitality; at the same time declaring it as his opinion that all heretics or schismatics, if once baptized, should be admitted into the Church without a repetition of the ordinance.

As this appears to be a matter of some importance, and as much stress has been laid on the practice and opinion of Cyprian, as being favourable to re-baptization I will here set down the sum of the opinions which were advocated on either side of the question. This epitome of the subject is afforded by St. Austin in his 74th Epistle to Pompey, beginning—*Si quis ergo â quâcunque heresi venerit*—&c.

"If any one comes over to us, from whatsoever heresy it be,"—is the opinion of the Roman Bishop—"let him be received into the church without rebaptization, by imposition of hands only: let none in any case whatever be rebaptized." St. Cyprian, on the other extreme, asserts that all those who have been baptized by any hereticks or schismatics whatever ought to be re-baptized. For in his 75th Epistle to Magnus, who asked his opinion about the baptism of the Novatians, whether they ought to be excepted out of the number of those separatists, who were to be re-baptized, since they owned the same faith as the true Church did, with respect to the Trinity, and baptized after the same manner—he tells him that they ought to be re-baptized as well as the rest; forasmuch as there was no true baptism out of the Church."—*Reeve's Apologies vol. II.* 248.

Certainly no two opinions could be more opposed to each other than these are. St. Austin, however, qualifies the declaration of the Bishop of Rome, and sof-

tens it down by making an exception or two to it. He ventures to explain the meaning of Stephen, by stating that those only must be meant, who were in their infancy baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity ; but that those who had been baptized in any other name, should again partake of the ordinance in question, on their admission to the Church. This explanation, it will be perceived, lessens considerably the difference between the opposing parties, and brings the whole controversy to the issue of the following question : " Whether adult persons, who had been irregularly or improperly baptized in their infancy, should again be baptized on their application to be admitted into the true Church ?" And it is supposed by the writers of that day, that if Stephen had lived to review his opinions, and to consider the subject with mature deliberation, he would have ultimately acquiesced in the decision of the African Church. Such a result, however, a combination of circumstances prevented from being consummated. The consequence has been that a complete separation took place between the African and European Churches, which lasted until the overthrow of Christianity in Africa by the Saracens, towards the latter end of the seventh century.

About the same time another question regarding the Sacrament of Baptism was agitated in the African Church. It referred to the administration of that ordinance to infants. The doubt was—not whether they ought to be baptized, for of that point there seems to have been no question—but at what time the ordinance ought to be celebrated ; whether it should be performed on the second or third day after the child's birth ; or whether, like circumcision under the Old Testa-

ment, it ought to be deferred until the eighth day. In order to determine this matter the African prelate so often mentioned above—Cyprian—assembled at Carthage a council of sixty-six Bishops. The determination at which they arrived is stated by Cyprian himself, in a letter which he wrote shortly afterwards to *Fidus*, one of his presbyters. It is there stated—*Epist.* LX. *p.* 97.—"That it was not necessary to defer the Baptism of infants; that it was the unanimous opinion of the Council, that the mercy and grace of God were not to be denied to any one, though as soon as he was born." He concludes his letter by declaring it to be the sense of the council in question, "that none ought to be forbidden Baptism and the grace of God; which, as it was to be observed and retained towards all men, ought more particularly to be observed in the case of infants and new-born children." With regard to this decision of the African Bishops, it may be observed that Infant Baptism seems to have been no new doctrine amongst them. Indeed St. Austin assures us of this—*Epist.* XXVIII. *ad Hieron. vol.* II. 108—and says expressly—"that in this respect Cyprian made no new decree, but kept the faith of the Church most firm and sure."

As the age in which Cyprian lived is considered by all modern Theologians as the purest of primitive times, and as his opinions are referred to by all parties in matters of modern disputation, it will not perhaps be here thought out of place, if I state his own views of Infant Baptism, as I find them set down in his discourse—*De Lapsis, page* 171.—He is speaking of those persons who had once belonged to the communion of the Church, but in time of persecution had fallen away

and joined in the abominable ritual of the heathen worshippers ; and urges as the greatest possible aggravation of their apostasy, that "their infants and children were exposed to ruin, and had lost that which they had obtained at their first coming into the world." Here he undoubtedly means either their right to Baptism, or the fruit and benefit which it might produce in their after life and conversation : which of these is his true meaning, it is not very material to enquire. But the most important part of the general question seems to be clearly expounded in his eloquent address to parents, where he brings in their children pleading against them at the last great day of account. "It was no fault of ours,—we did not of ourselves forsake the Sacraments of our Lord, and come over to join with profane impieties ; the unfaithfulness of others has undone us, we have found our parents to be murderers. They denied us God for our Father, and the Church for our mother : for while we, alas ! were little, unable to take any care of ourselves, and ignorant of so great a wickedness, we were ensnared by the treachery of others, and by them betrayed into a partnership of their impieties."

Before dismissing the subjects of ancient controversies about the Sacrament of Baptism, a few general remarks on their character and tendency may not be altogether inappropriate.

And first we may observe, that the period from the death of the Apostles to the year 314 of the Christian era, when by a decree of the Emperor Constantine, the religion of Christ became the established religion of the Roman Empire, is admitted, I believe universally, to be the purest and most scriptu-

ral age of the church. The very form of words which the Apostles used,—their manner and method of performance,—their practice in the most minute particulars—would no doubt be at that time the subjects of general imitation. The ancient Christians would remember the different exhortations of our Lord's personal followers, and would learn of them the true way in every particular. This was undoubtedly an immense advantage, and one which no future age of the church could possibly enjoy. For any doubt or difficulty that might come across their minds, whilst reflecting on any part of the mysteries of redemption, would at once meet with a ready resolution from the lips of inspiration. This kind of knowledge is not to be gathered from any writings. However, vividly, and truly any author may picture forth his feelings and reflections, and, however much of life and vigour he may throw into the composition of his works, yet he cannot show us himself, under the every day circumstances of the world. The thing is impossible. Hence it is, that the advantage of the first converts to the Gospel, were far superior to ours at the present day. They enjoyed the privilege of learning both from the precepts and example of the blessed Apostles. We have nothing but the precepts. The comparison between the spiritual light which shone on them, and that which is vouchsafed to us, may be illustrated by calling it in their days the bright and clear refulgence of a mid-day sun, and in ours that of a full moon at night. They perceived every object, and turning, and winding, and eminence in the vast and beautiful prospect which the kingdom of heaven and the scheme of human redemption, placed before the

eye of their understandings—they perceived them clearly and distinctly: there could be no doubt about their size, their importance, or their distance. We, on the contrary, behold the ceremonies and observances, which were thus familiar to ancient ritualists, through the dim vista of the past ages: a sort of haze intercepts them from our view. And we are thus apt to mistake one object for another,—to miscalculate the importance of one prominent feature in the landscape,—and form a wrong estimate of the distance at which we stand from the site of another.

Hence, therefore, any light which the practice or precepts of primitive times may throw on the practice and precepts of the Apostles, ought not to be excluded. On the contrary, it is entitled to be followed with reverence, and to be always marked in the various hues and shades, which it casts on the rites and ceremonies of the Apostolical church.

It is for these reasons that the opinions of those good and holy men, who flourished in the church before its corruption by the schemes and ambition of worldly men, and who endured suffering and persecution for the sake of the cross, are of great weight in settling any matter of controversy that may now disturb the repose of the church. They seem to have had no object in view but the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdon on earth, and the salvation of immortal souls; and we are certainly justified in considering their opinions of a much more disinterested character, and of a far greater authority, than any that may have been adduced in subsequent times.

From a review of their opinions on the Sacrament of Baptism, in as far as they may be gathered from

their various controversial writings on that subject, one fact is extremely apparent. They never questioned the propriety of baptising infants; nor do they inform us at what particular time that custom was introduced into the church. Hence we conclude, according to the strictest mode of logical ratiocination, that the apostles of our blessed Lord not only sanctioned the practice in question by their example, but recommended it to the imitation of their followers and successors in the ministry.

But I will defer the consideration of these inferences and their application to the modern disputations about baptism, until the course of the argument seems to render their introduction advisable. In the mean time let us trace the Baptismal controversy through the middle ages of the Christian Church.

SECTION 3.

THE PETRO-BRUSSIAN CONTROVERSY.

From the period in which the controversies mentioned in the foregoing sections took place, until the tenth or eleventh century, the doctrine of Infant Baptism does not appear to have been at any time called in question. It was the universal practice of both the Latin and Greek Churches to administer that ordinance to infants as soon as possible after their birth. They differed indeed as to the mode of administration: but never about the qualifications or age of the recipient.

Towards the latter end of the tenth century, however, the authority of the Roman Pontiff so far en-

croached on the civil authority of temporal Sovreigns, and on the liberty of their subjects, that the power of the civil magistrate was threatened with annihilation. This state of things excited in the minds of the reflecting part of the community much murmuring and discontent, and afterwards occasioned direct opposition. Although the opposition thus generated did not in the first instance gain sufficient strength to obtain a redress of the grievances complained of, or cause a change of policy in the councils of the vatican; yet it served to open men's eyes to the nature and extent of Roman supremacy, and in some instances to incite them to adopt active measures for the purpose of checking its progress.

But the court of Rome, with that profound knowledge of the human heart, and that penetrating sagacity into human affairs which have ever distinguished its policy, averted the storm which was thus gathering in the distant horizon, by proposing an expedition, comprising the whole serviceable forces of christendom, for the recovery of the Holy land from the Saracens. Such an expedition was in perfect accordance with the chivalric spirit of the age; and accordingly, all who could wield a sword or bear a shield, eagerly engaged in it, from the twofold motive of testifying their piety, and acquiring renown. Thousands of valiant men thus left their native home: but never returned. Still other thousands followed, in the hope of meeting with better fortunes. Thus the vigour and genius of that age were wasted—uselessly wasted, on the shores of Palestine. Christendom was drained of its civil strength and mental energy: so that the church of Rome having sent all the restless spirits of the times

to seek their fortunes or rather their graves in a distant land, had full liberty to exercise, uncontrolled, its assumed and unscriptural sway over the nations of Europe. In this way it cannot be doubted that the wars of the Crusaders defered the Reformation of religion for at least 400 years.

But this is digressing from our subject. About half a century or so before the era of the crusaders, some religionists on the confines of France and Italy began, among other errors, to deny the use of Baptism altogether. Their numbers seem to have been inconsiderable. Mr. Wall has taken a great deal of pains to discover whether they were a portion of that sect commonly known in Ecclesiastical history by the name of the Waldenses. But as the modern Waldenses deny the tenets thus attributed to their ancestors, and as the accounts which we possess of them are extremely contradictory, he concludes that the error in question had been countenanced only by a few of them, who afterwards either left off their error or were lost among the great body of their more orthodox countrymen.

Soon after the publication of this error, a controversy arose which gave a new character to the dispute. It was begun by Peter Bruis, a Roman Catholic Priest. His peculiar notions with regard to the efficacy of the Sacrament bear a strong resemblance to the doctrines which are held by the Baptists of the present day.—He asserted that it was useless and contrary to Scripture to baptize Infants, because they were unable to exercise the previous qualifications of faith and repentance. In support of this doctrine he produced the texts—"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,

and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."—*Acts* II. 38. "And many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized." *Acts* XVIII. 8. From these and other passages of the same nature he came to the conclusion that Baptism was useless towards every purpose of salvation, unless the recipient was capable of exercising faith. Hence, he reasoned, none can be fit subjects for the ordinance of Baptism except adults.

The place where these dogmas first began to prevail was Provence, in the south of France. *Peter* Abbot of *Clugny*, a learned man in those days, answered the opinons of Bruis, in a letter which he addressed to the several Diocesans, who held ecclesiastical supremacy in the District of Provence. But before the letter in question was published, the author of the new opinion met with more formidable opponents. His doctrines being at first very popular, gained him many followers. In the district already mentioned the discipline of the Church was despised, the priests beat and maltreated, and all religious ceremonies abolished. These disorders excited the attention of the Bishops of that country, who, with the assistance of the princes, drove away the supporters of the new doctrines, more especially their author. From thence he went to Languedoc, where he published his errors. In Toulouse and other cities he attracted many followers, and was the occasion of several infractions of the peace. At last he was seized, and burnt alive at St. Giles, in Languedoc. This happened about the year of our era 1110, and some time before the Abbot of Clugny published his letter against the Petrobrussian errors.

Experience however has proved, that religious novelties cannot be extinguished by the execution of those who introduce them. And so it happened in the present instance. Henry, who had been a monk, and a disciple of De Bruis, continued to preach and publish the peculiar doctrines of his predecessor. Not content with the new inventions already made, he added other errors to them. I cannot discover whether he shared the same fate with Peter de Brius. But it is stated that Cardinal *Alberick*, who was also Bishop of Ostia, and Legate from the Court of Rome, brought the learned St. Bernard to France in order to confute the doctrines and tenets, which the new teachers disseminated. Henry found refuge in the territory of the Earl of St. Giles, who had perhaps been induced to protect him, from something akin to the motives mentioned in the beginning of this section. Bernard wrote a long letter to the said Earl, in which he not only refutes the doctrines of Henry on the subject of infant Baptism, but gives the following character of him :

" The man, says St. Bernard, is a Renegado, who leaving off his habit of religion,—for he was a monk—returned like a dog to his vomit, to the filthiness of the flesh and the world : and being ashamed to stay where he was known he became a vagabond ; and being in beggary he made the Gospel maintain him—for he is a scholar—and setting to sale the word of God he preached for bread. What he got of the silly people, or of the good women, he spent in gaming, at dice, or some worse way." * * * * * * " Enquire if you please, noble Sir, how he left the city of Lausanne, what sort of departure he made out of Maine, and also from Poitou, and from Bourdeaux ; to none of which places

he dares return, having left such ill repute behind him." *Wall, vol.* II. *page* 253.

This is not the place to notice the arguments of this eminent writer against the Petrobrussians. Suffice it to say, that they by no means produced the anticipated effect. For Arnold, a native of Brescia, who came from Italy to France, taught almost the same doctrines concerning Baptism, and propagated the other opinions peculiar to the new religionists. Among other bold actions, he attacked the Clergy in general, on the subject of temporal possessions, and maintained that Ecclesiastics ought to have no property whatever. Subsequently he went to Rome, where he had gained many followers : but he was driven from that city, was taken, and like the founder of this sect, was burnt alive about the year 1150.

France was not the only place in which it was attempted to propagate anti-pedobaptist principles in those days. Thirty of the followers of Peter De Bruis came over to England in the year 1160, and endeavored to sow their errors in that country. Here they obtained the name of Publicans or Popelicans, and soon met with a check from the then reigning monarch, Henry II. His ecclesiastical courts pronounced them to be dangerous heretics ; and they were, in consequence of this sentence, burnt in the forehead, and whipped publicly by the hands of the common executioner.—*Du Pin, III. vol.* 141, *Salmon's Chronology of Eng. Hist.* 15. This severe treatment not only prevented them from making converts, but put an end to their teaching.

Very little is known respecting the Petrobrussian Baptists after this period. Their tenets were formally

condemned in various Councils of England, France, and Italy. From Languedoc and Thoulouse they were expelled by the strong arm of the Law, and it is said they retired to Alby, from which place they afterwards took the name of Albigenses.

From the few authentic materials that have descend-to'us, respecting the times in which the above named opinions were propagated, we can gather but a very unsatisfactory account of the controversy which it occasioned. There is no full account—at least I have met with none—which developes the opinions and arguments adduced on either side, and which may enable us to judge of the manner in which the disputation was carried on. This is a matter of regret. But we must attribute it to the spirit of the times in which those events occurred. Men were then more accustomed to handle the sword than to use the pen; and ecclesiastics were not exceptions to this general character. Hence we find that new errors were met—not by argument, and plain and fair discussion of the truth —but by persecution and death. The men whom the ecclesiastics of the day were too ignorant to answer by argument, they were anxious to punish and extirpate from the land, by every kind and mode of oppression.

SECTION 4.

THE GERMAN CONTROVERSY.

The reformation of religion from the errors and superstitions of popery was the source of many novel opinions, and tenets of rather a doubtful tendency. The religious energy of the north of Europe, so long con-

fined and paralyzed by the usurpations of Roman supremacy, now broke forth with redoubled strength, and in many instances led men, through an idea that they were promoting the cause of religion, beyond the bounds of common discretion. Not satisfied with purifying what had been defiled, and rejecting what had been human inventions in the doctrines and worship of the Church of Rome, they were carried to the opposite extreme; and rejected every thing like order and regularity in matters of ecclesiastical government, under an impression, that the more they despised human restraints, the nearer they approached to the model of the primitive discipline and worship.

It was in such a state of the public mind that the subject of Baptism became again a matter of controversy, and afforded cause for consequences and effects, which had not characterized the management of any former disputation. Menno Simon, a native Friesland, having been a Romish Priest, and as he himself confesses, a notorious profligate, resigned his office and rank in the Church of Rome, and publicly embraced the communion of the Anabaptists in the year 1536. From that time his conduct seems to have been correct and exemplary, and soon after, being solicited by many of his brethren to assume the rank and functions of a teacher among them, he laboured both in Holland and Germany with such zeal and success, till his death in 1561, that he has been styled on the Continent, the Parent and Apostle of the Baptists. And a better proof of the veneration and esteem in which he was held by his followers, cannot be produced, than the fact that they, in honour of his name, designated themselves by the appellation of Mennonites.

Of the Mennonites Dr. Mosheim says "they are not entirely mistaken when they boast their descent from the Waldenses, Petrobrussians, and other ancient sects. On the contrary these are described as having maintained, in common with the Mennonites, a doctrine which he considers as the true source of all the peculiarities of their descendants. And it is most certain, he adds, that the greatest part of these peculiarities were approved of by many of those who, before the dawn of the reformation, entertained the doctrine just referred to. This doctrine, as a sincere belief in its truth, and an energetic zeal in acting upon it under all possible circumstances, exercised a considerable influence over the future destinies of the German Baptists, I will here set down. It was—"that the kingdom of Christ, or the visible Church he had established on earth, was an assembly of true and real saints, and ought therefore to be inaccessible to the wicked and unrighteous; and also to be exempt from all those institutions which human prudence suggests to oppose the progress of iniquity, or to correct and reform transgressors."

The consequences of admitting this novel tenet into their practical system of church discipline, are fully exemplified in the excesses and enormities, which history attributes to the Anabaptists of Munster, a city of Westphalia. These enthusiasts, under an impression that they were doing God service, and were contributing their aid towards the accomplishment of the legitimate ends of Christianity, resolved upon a course of active opposition, which had for its object the overthrow of all divine and human institutions, and the exemption of their own order from the power of the

civil magistrate. Two of their number, John Matthias a baker of Haarlem, and John Boccold or Beukels a journeyman tailor of Leyden, emboldened by the countenance which their opinions had received, made several attempts without success to become masters of the town, with a view to get their tenets established by public authority. At last having secretly called in their associates from the neighbouring country, they suddenly took possession of the senate-house and arsenal in the night time; and running through the streets with drawn swords, and horrible howlings, cried out alternately—"Repent and be baptized," and "Depart ye ungodly." The more wealthy and respectable of the inhabitants left the town, and fled in confusion to distant parts of the country; leaving their houses and all their immoveable property to be seized, and appropriated by these warlike fanatics.

Having thus obtained complete possession of Munster, the first care of their leaders was directed to the formation of a new constitution, and of a permanent Government, to direct the future energies of their community. They abolished all former customs and principles of policy, and adopted in their stead, such as they imagined would be more compatible with their anticipated happiness, and their regenerated nature. Among other things, acting upon the general principle already noticed, as being descended to them from former Baptists, they ordained that all distinctions occasioned by birth, or rank, or wealth, being contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, which considers all men as equal, should be entirely abolished;—that all Christians throwing their possessions into one common stock, should live together in that state of equality

which becomes members of the same family ;—that as neither the laws of nature nor the precepts of the New Testament, had imposed any restraints upon men, with regard to the number of wives which they might marry, they should use that liberty which God himself had granted to the Patriarchs.

Boccold, partly by intrigue, and partly by persuasion, got himself elected King of this newly formed principality. The impetuosity of his character, and the boldness of his plans, comported admirably with the duties which this dignified station imposed upon him. And he lost no time in carrying into practice the abstract principles on which the policy of his Government was constructed, by taking an active part in raising ramparts to defend the town, and engaging heartily and for example's sake in every description of manual labour. He, moreover, availed himself of the privileges which were mutually acknowledged to belong by divine authority to the select community, in respect of a plurality of wives, to such a degree, that at last their number amounted to fourteen.

After the example of their King the multitude gave themselves up to the most licentious and uncontrolled gratification of their desires. Polygamy had been established by law and its inseparable concomitant, divorce, was soon introduced us a natural consequence, which in its turn became a new source of corruption. Every excess was committed of which the passions of men are capable, when unrestrained, neither by the authority of laws nor the sense of decency ; and by a monstrous and almost incredible conjunction, voluptuousness was grafted on religion, and dissolute riot accompanied the austerities of fanatical devotion.

The excesses which were thus perpetrated in the face of open day, and with the sanction of religious privileges, drew the attention of the Princes of the German Empire. Resolved upon repressing principles, which if once admitted into the code of civil Government, would overthrow the ancient land marks of society, these Chiefs collected a number of forces, and entrusted the command of them to a leader of skill and distinction, who lost no time in commencing hostities against the devoted city. He found the fortifications so strong and the ramparts so well guarded, that he dared not venture an assault. He, therefore, converted the seige into a blockade : and after remaining in presence of the besieged, for nearly two months, and when the Garrison had been reduced by famine to the utmost distress, he took the town by stratagem through means of information given by a deserter. The Anabaptists though surprised defended themselves with valour : but being overpowered by numbers most of them were slain, and the rest taken prisoners. Their leaders were seized, and after undergoing various kinds of suffering and degradation peculiar to the age in which they lived, they were at last consigned to a cruel and ignominious death. This happened in the month of June 1535, three hundred years ago.

It is but just to remark that no attempt was ever afterwards made by any of the Anabaptist writers, either to justify, or even to palliate the wickedness of these practices. Being the occasion of much reproach and scandal to their tenets, and doctrines in general, they are looked upon with concern and sorrow, and the principles from which they spring are wholly dis-

claimed by all of the Baptist persuasion at the present day. The overthrow of Munster, seems to have put an end forever to the exercise of an authority which was wrong in its theory, and dangerous as well as sinful in its practice. The Baptists of the low countries and other parts of Germany, were so far from adopting the principles and tenets of those of Munster, that from a wish to avoid every sort of collision with temporal authorities, they went to the opposite extreme, and held it unlawful to wage war, or to accept of civil offices. Such is the general character which distinguishes the tenets and morality of the German Anabaptists of the present day.

The most eminent writer who opposed the spread of Anabaptist principles, was the celebrated Luther. Perceiving, with that profound sagacity which was natural to him, that doctrines of such fanatical tendency would through time prove wholly subversive of that ecclesiastical polity, which good men of all ages have considered most advantageous to the well being of the church, he not only wrote against them, but made use of his personal influence with the rulers of the land to check, and if possible, to extirpate them. His works are not within my reach; but if my memory does not much deceive me, he answers, with force and clearness, many of the arguments against infant Baptism, which are reproduced by Baptist writers of modern times, as if no answer had ever appeared to them. The celebrated reformers Melancthon, Calvin, Zuinglius, Bullinger, Regius, and others, took part in the same controversy; and on several occasions refuted the Anabaptist arguments in public conferences and disputations. *Spanheim de origine Anabaptistarum.*

From a general view of the conduct of the Munster Anabaptists, and of the circumstances in which they were placed, two very important conclusions appear extremely evident.

The first is nothing more than what has been repeatedly proved in every instance, where an attempt had been made to supersede the necessity of human legislation, by a practical application of the laws and precepts, and examples, of the New Testament writers. The laws which Christ and his followers promulged in the world were not evidently intended to direct in every particular the political movements, and practical measures of any community. They refer to the discipline and morality of that kingdom, which is indeed to be begun on earth, but which in its nature and character is altogether heavenly. All that reason, disciplined by experience, can therefore expect, is merely that human legislation be not, in its spirit and tendency, opposed to those general precepts, which our holy religion inculcates. They are the foundation; human laws the superstucture. And neither the former nor the latter are more requisite, for constituting the parts of a substantial building, than the combined authority of divine and human legislation, seem to be for regulating the morals, and fostering the active energies of every well governed community. It is a dream of the imagination, which could enter the mind only of an enthusiast, to think that the kingdoms of the world might become the kingdoms of God and his Christ, by bringing human force and violence to bear on the mere practical operation of the Gospel precepts. Every attempt to apply these means to the bringing about of the proposed end, has invariably proved abor-

tive. And the reason is evident. So long as human nature is imperfect, and tainted with many evils and infirmities—so long as human passions are permitted to exercise their baneful influence in the different parts of the social machine, it is the dictate of both religion and wisdom to improve the former and repress the latter by human means and sources. It is only in the absence of sin and imperfection,—in the absence of every desire and wish which may proceed from bodily weakness or infirmity, that a purely spiritual community can be formed, and permanently established. Then, and not till then, may we expect to witness the existence of such a state of society as the Munster Reformers appear to have had in contemplation.

The second inference is—that when men's minds are once excited and impelled beyond the restraints which religion, and a devout reverence for its various obligations, naturally impose on every well tutored disposition, it is impossible to predict either their ultimate measures, or the character of the various movements by which those measures are brought about. Christian charity compels us to suppose that Boccold and Matthias, together with their associates, acted in the first instance under an impression that they were doing God service, and at the same time promoting their own happiness. None of them evidently foresaw the calamitous results to which their tenets and their public conduct evidently tended. The intention which may have actuated them was perhaps disinterested, and might possibly have had for its object the general good of mankind: but it seems to have been conceived through enthusiasm, and carried into practice through a degree of blindness, ignorance, and fanaticism, that

affords to the attentive reader an additional reason for deploring and lamenting the weakness and constitutional frailty of our common nature. By taking possession of the city, and assuming to themselves the reins of Government, they entered on a career which they could neither control nor direct, and whose termination appeared to them a matter of perfect indifference. Once seated on the car of state, they found its motions regulated and impelled by sources of power to which they had hitherto been strangers, and which their limited knowledge and experience prevented them from fully comprehending. The unseemly object glided on, marking its track in the blood of opponents, and seemingly without controul. Its motion became accelerated, and its management still more precarious. At length, in excess of madness, it drove at full fury, regardless of every obstacle, crushing under its weight both friends and foes, until through timely interference its progress was suddenly arrested. Its incongruous parts were shattered and separated by the strong concussion : it was overturned, and buried under it the wild and fanatical hands that first set it in motion.

Here those whose religious reveries are guided by the impulse of fanaticism, or are imbued with a laudable desire of improving the condition of the human race, may read a lesson of useful instruction and permanent reflection. The Utopia, which in their mind's eye they perceive in the distance before them ; and to which, with characteristic generosity, they would invite all that desire human happiness, and spiritual comfort, may, notwithstanding their inward conviction to the contrary, prove to be only a barren waste, or a dreary

wilderness. Their fond imaginations may have been excited to the highest pitch by contemplating the enjoyment and the pleasure, which would result from the possession of a place which, at a distance, is thus inviting. And they may have reasoned themselves and others into a belief, that the felicity of living in such a place would be inferior only to the bliss of the faithful in Heaven. But not unfrequently, as in the case which we have just contemplated, they have been deceived—miserably, woefully deceived. They have approached the confines of the promised land, in full expectation of seeing it covered with fruit, herbs and flowers, of the most delightful kind: but to their sorrow and disappointment they have discovered too late that it was a desert, barren in the highest degree, and that its only produce was bitterness and misery.

SECTION 5.

THE CONTROVERSY IN ENGLAND.

The doctrines and errors of the German Annabaptists do not seem to have gained any permanent footing in England until towards the close of the Reign of Charles I. Several attempts had indeed been made to make converts to these peculiar tenets at an earlier period: but as the fires of religious persecution were yet unextinguished, an abrupt and sudden check was laid on such proceedings by the summary punishment of their promoters and abettors. So far back as the Reign of Henry II. a few of the Petrobrussian zea-

lots found their way to Britain, and endeavoured with all the enthusiasm of religious partizanship to propagate the tenets of their founder. Their progress however was speedily arrested, as already noticed—page 22, by the barbarous measures peculiar to those times, and their errors wholly extirpated from the land.

The next appearance of converts to these opinions happened in the Reign of Henry VIII. That monarch seems to have been extremely jealous of any novelty which might be broached either in the dogmas of Theology or the principles of government, imagining no doubt that both were intimately connected with the stability of his throne, and that the least change in the practical application of either might ultimately tend to endanger his personal security. From this source arose that watchful attention with which, during the whole of his reign, the religious opinions of the nation were not only regarded, but directed and controlled.

In May 1535 it was discovered that a number of people, whose religious tenets led them, among other errors, to deny the efficacy of Infant Baptism, had formed a congregation, and were assembling together in a certain part of the Metropolis for the purposes of public worship. Of these, nineteen Dutchmen, and six women, were examined at St. Paul's cross, in presence of a vast concourse of the inhabitants. Eleven recanted, but the remaining fourteen, persisting with great obstinacy in what was considered their "dangerous and damnable heresy," were burnt at the stake. And thus, by means of a proceeding which the modern Christian regards with feelings of abhorrence and disgust, as altogether incompatible with the spirit and tendency of that pure religion which he professes, a

check was a second time opposed to the propagation of Annabaptist principles in England.*

* Collier's Eccl. Hist. vol. II. 100. Stow's Annal. 571. Strype in his Ecclesiastical Memorials tells an anecdote or two, illustrative of the tendency and effect of Anabaptistical principles during the period referred to in the text:

"Among other dangerous errors vented now-a-days by the Anabaptists, before spoken of, and believed by many honest meaning people, they held that after an apostacy from the truth, there was no salvation: and that this was the sin against the Holy Ghost. This put one about these times into despair: for he had fallen from the truth known, and after fell to mocking and scorning it. At length upon some melancholic thoughts, he fell into the hideous condition of desperation, reckoning verily that he had sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost. He repaired unto Latimer the great Divine and casuist at this time, and told him, that "he should be damned, and that it was not possible for him to be saved, for that he had sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost." Latimer did think, that falling away from the truth, was indeed the sin meant, of which the Scripture said—*it should never be forgiven.* But he told the man "that it was a vehement manner of speaking in the Scripture, but was not spoken universally, as though God did never forgive it, but it was commonly called unforgivable, because God seldom forgiveth it. Yet that there was no sin so great but that God may forgive it, and doth forgive it, to the repentant heart." And when no argument he could use had any force upon the man—this best quieted him, and took some place with him. But the said good Father made this observation hereupon,—How seldom the sin is forgiven, in that he knew no more, but that one man that fell from the truth, and after repented, and came to grace again, though he had, as he said, known many that knew more than he, and some whom he honoured, that after they had fallen from the truth, never, this man excepted, returned to grace and the truth again.

"The Anabaptists of these days, were generally infected also with Pelagianism and other heresies; they were also very confident and disputatious. One of this sort was now crept into the court, namely Robert Cooke. He was a person of a very fair courteous deportment, of some learning, and particularly well skilled in music. When Parkhurst—he that was afterwards Bishop of Norwich—was preacher to Queen Catharine Parr at the court, he was keeper of the

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, 40 years after the period above referred to, another Conventicle of Dutch Annabaptists was discovered at a house in Aldgate, without the bars of the city. The laws for punishing subjects for the sake of their religious opinions, being still permitted to remain as a blemish on the British Constitution ; and being in every instance strictly enforced by the vigorous government of Elizabeth, twenty seven of these people were legally seized and committed for trial. By the arguments and earnest exhortations of several pious ministers of the day, four of them were led to acknowledge their error, and to read their recantation* publicly at St. Paul's Cross. At-

wine-cellar. Here he became acquainted with the said Parkhurst, and also with Coverdale and Dr. Turner, and other learned men, in their attendance at court. This man, besides that he was against the baptism of Infants, denied original sin, and concerning the Lord's Supper he dispersed divers odd things. The said Dr. Turner wrote a book against him, in which he confuted his opinion of original sin. He often created trouble to Parkhurst and Coverdale about these controversies, so that they were tired with him ; for he was a very wordy man. When Jewel and other learned men, his friends, came sometimes to court to visit Parkhurst, Cooke would presently begin a dispute with them, and would never make an end. This man seems to have been among the exiles under Queen Mary and became then known to the learned Rudolph Gualter at Zuric. Who afterwards, in his correspondence with the said Parkhurst, then Bishop of Norwich, inquired after him ; which was in the year 1573. He was then alive, and still in the court, being one of the Gentleman of the Queen's chapel. And for his opinions, which he still retained, had some time before been like to have been discharged of his place. But he made a recantation ; and so continued still in his room at the chapel."

Strype's Memorials, Vol. II. p. 110—112. fol : edit: pp. 70. 71.

*The following is the form of the recantation in question : —" Whereas I, N. N. being seduced by the spirit of error, and by false Teachers, his Ministers, have fallen into many

tempts of the same charitable nature were repeatedly made in the case of the others; but apparently without much success. The restoration of only one female to the bosom of the Church, was the solitary result of all the pains and arguments which the Church Ministers brought to bear upon the subject. The rest were all banished except two, who proving more insolent and refractory than their companions, forfeited their lives according to Law, notwithstanding the exertions of Fox, the Martyrologist, to induce the Sovereign to commute their sentence to perpetual banishment.*

But although these measures operated as a temporary check upon the zeal and enthusiasm of the Anabaptist Teachers, yet they were far from rooting out of the nation their favourite opinions and doctrines.—During the theological discussions which were occasionally conducted, it must be confessed, with more

damnable and detestable heresies, viz:—1, That Christ took not flesh of the substance of the blessed Virgin Mary. 2, That Infants born of faithful parents ought to be rebaptised. 3. That no christian man ought to be a Magistrate or bear the sword or office of authority. 4. And that it is not lawful for a christian man to take an oath. Now, by the grace of God and through conference with good and learned Ministers of Christ his church, I do understand and acknowledge the same to be most damnable and detestable heresies, and do ask God here before his Church mercy for my said former errors, and do forsake them, recant, and renounce them, and abjure them from the very bottom of my heart. And further I confess that the whole doctrine and religion established in this realm of England, as also that which is received and practised in the Dutch Church here in this city, is sound, true, and according to the word of God: whereunto in all things, I submit myself, and will most gladly be a member of the said Dutch Church; from henceforth hereby abandoning and forsaking all and every Anabaptistical error."—Stow's Annal.

*Fuller's Church Hist. Book 9, Collier's Do. vol. II. 549.

royal pageantry than wisdom, before the pedantic James I., the Anabaptist tenets did not seem to be lost sight of. On the contrary, they were thought worthy of a grave and serious discussion by many of those disinterested Divines, to whose learning and diligence we owe our present English translation of the Holy Scriptures. And to this difference of sentiment or indecision on a matter of such vital importance as the Sacrament of Baptism, may be attributed, without any imputation of going beyond the bounds of probability, that uncertain and equivocal rendering of the Greek verb *Βαπτιζω*, which is so notorious to every critical reader of the New Testament. But this in passing.—In the general clamour that was raised in the Reign of Charles I. against the altar and the throne, and whose declared object had been the subversion of both, the Anabaptists joined with much zeal; expecting that the period, when their peculiar doctrines should be triumphant in the nation, was at hand, and rejoicing at the prospect of their approaching liberty. We do not indeed read of any great political leader, whose avowed religious opinions were those of Antipœdobaptism, in the number of those who composed the long Parliament, and brought their Sovereign to the scaffold: but from what afterwards occurred, it may be readily inferred that their influence must have contributed in some measure to shape and direct the events of those troublous times.

Their numbers, in comparison with the presbyterians and independents, were inconsiderable; and finding themselves thwarted in several of their favourite measures under the Government of Cromwell, they did not hesitate to form a political faction, and to join the

royalists in a petition for the recall of Charles II. The document in which their wishes were embodied is preserved by Mr. Wall, in his history of Infant Baptism, and by Collier in his Church history, and is no doubt a true exemplification of the doctrines and principles which at that period characterized the Antipœdobaptist body. This happened whilst the English Monarch was sojourning in exile in Flanders. Their petition was forwarded to him: but in so unfavourable a light did its contents appear to him, that he did not deem it necessary to make any reply. The fact is they were urged to this measure, by contingencies which it had been impossible for them to foresee, and apparently adopted it rather as a harmless expedient, than as a certain means of bettering their condition. For the inflexible tenacity with which they adhered to heir peculiar notions, and the prominency they gave to their republican principles, preclude at once the supposition that their wishes were sincere, or their loyalty unfeigned. Their political views, and measures, subsequently to the restoration, fully justify this opinion. Their influence was invariably found to be opposed to the wishes of government, and on several occasions was carried so far as to be personally offensive to the King. On the junction of the dissenting body, of whom the Annabaptists are represented to have been the most forward and clamourous, with the papists, for the overthrow of the Church and Monarchy, towards the latter end of Charles' reign, an order in Council was issued—Dec. 4th, 1681—"*for putting the laws in execution against seditious and unlawful meetings, and conventicles of Anabaptists and others.*"

In this reign, however, an important modification of the old German Anabaptist tenets took place. One of the fundamental political principles of the original founders of this denomination, be it remembered, was a determination to withhold their allegiance from the civil magistrate, on the ground that obedience to the will of a mortal like themselves, was contrary to the declarations of Scripture, and therefore illegal. We have seen too that the recantation prescribed to the Baptists of Queen Elizabeth's time, contained an express clause relative to their acknowledged opinions in this particular. And to this defiance of temporal authority, may no doubt be traced the various annoyances and interruptions to which their peace, as a religious body, was at different times exposed, both before and after the Commonwealth of Cromwell.—But towards the end of Charles II. reign they seem to have greatly relaxed their rigidity of principle with regard to temporal matters; evidently perceiving the impossibility of living in peace and freedom, under a monarch and a constitution with whose principles their own abstract tenets were practically at direct variance. So far did this wise resolution contribute to their happiness and liberty of conscience, that in the second year of king James II. reign a royal proclamation, generally authorizing the suspension of all penal laws and tests in matters of religion, included them in one of its clauses.

Henceforth the Baptismal controversy assumed a literary character. The controverted points, which formerly constituted the chief matter of a conventicle harangue, or the burden of a private discourse, now became subjects of public disputation. The dread

of exposure and imprisonment being removed, the supporters of Anabaptist principles hastened to enter the arena of literary strife, and to expound and support their principles to the satisfaction of the learned world. Combatants were not wanting on the opposite side of the question. And hence ensued a course of enquiry and investigation, which not only threw a flood of light on the institution, and orthodox administration of the Sacrament of Baptism, but also tended to lead men to the truth, and to confirm and illustrate the doctrines and practice of the Church of England.

Towards the latter end of the seventeenth century the celebrated John Bunyan published a number of works illustrative of the principles and tenets of the Antipædobaptists, and shewing their conformity in every respect with the precepts and examples of the first founders of christianity. He was a striking and highly imaginative writer, whose productions seem to have had a powerful effect on the public mind.—During the course of his ministry he published sixty tracts, "which equalled the number of years he lived." —*See his life.*

In the beginning of the last century Mr. Dorrington, Rector of Wittresham in Kent, published his "*Vindication of the Christian Church in the baptizing of Infants, drawn from the Holy Scriptures.*" This is an able work, and appears to have been written, not so much with a view to decide controverted points, as to afford to the members of the Church a true and scriptural explanation of her practice in that particular.—It is dictated in an humble, charitable, and christian spirit, and merits the perusal of all candid enquirers after truth.

On the same side followed Mr. Wall, Vicar of Shoreham in Kent, who published his History of Infant Baptism about the year 1702 or 3. This work is the most complete that has been written on the subject, either before or since the period of its publication; and in every page gives the most evident proofs of the learning, the industry, and the impartiality of the Author. And so highly did it stand in the esteem of his brethren in the ministry, that in convocation assembled they publicly voted him thanks in name of the Church, of which he still shines so bright an ornament.

He was answered by Dr. Gale in "*several letters to a friend*," a book which was published in London in 1711. This work displays much erudition, and a critical acumen far above mediocrity. The Doctor brought great learning and ingenuity to bear upon the subject: and the admirers of shining parts, will ever find cause of regret in the circumstance of his having misapplied them to the support of a bad cause. He attacked without mercy Dr. Hammond, Dr. Whitby, Mr. Dorrington and Mr. Wall; using language that was meant to prove offensive to the individuals, but evidently evading to meet them fairly and fearlessly on the controverted ground.

To Gale's work Mr. Wall published a rejoinder, which seems to have put an end to the controversy; and which indeed will appear to the impartial reader as a production whose reasoning is irresistible, and whose arguments are unanswerable.

About half a century posterior to the close of the controversy just noticed, another of a more determined and fiercer character broke out between Dr. Edward

Williams, a Divine of the Church of England, and Mr. Abraham Booth. It would be too tedious to mention here the numerous pamphlets, answers, and rejoinders, which passed between these sturdy controversialists. I will therefore take the liberty of referring those who wish to see a candid statement of the arguments on both sides of the question, to the 2nd Volume of Dr. Doddridge's Lectures, to Dr. Rippon's Baptist Register, or to Mr. Bulkley's "*Two discourses* on *Catholic Communion.*"

One thing, however, relating to this controversy, deserves notice; inasmuch as it has given a tone and character to the discussions of future Baptist writers and Preachers, on their favourite topic. Mr. Booth was the first of that denomination, who boldly and unhesitatingly ventured to declare, merely for the sake of supporting a particular point of a speculative nature, that the Old Testament had no connection with the New!—that the Jewish Church was built upon a foundation different from that on which the superstructure of the Christian Church is reared; and that consequently the rites and ordinances of the former can afford neither precedence nor argument in favour of any practices in the latter. These bold assumptions met with a prompt refutation from Dr. Williams, and were clearly shewn to be not only in direct opposition to the repeated declarations of Scripture itself, but also totally fallacious in their principle, and dangerous in their application. Indeed the matter was thought of so serious a nature, that many at that period did not hesitate to affirm that the author of such wilful perversion of Sacred Writ came within the application of the awful threat, held out in the few last verses of the Book of Revelations.

The Baptist writers however did not appear to be of this opinion. For many of them not only hailed the discovery of this argument as a means of releasing their peculiar tenets from the imputation of contradiction, and opposition to Scripture truth, but looked upon its author as the foremost champion of their cause,—gifted and specially sent for the elucidation of their fundamental doctrines. As it is my intention to refer subsequently, and more at large, to this part of the subject, let it suffice here to state that Baptist writers of modern times—of the present day,—rest much of their hope of success in their discussion on this separation of the Old and New Testament dispensations; altogether overlooking its unscriptural nature, and the triumphant refutation which it has more than once received.

To follow the controversy with equal minuteness to the end of the 18th century, and from thence to the present day, would far exceed the limits which I originally intended for this chapter. Nor does such a course seem necessary. For the character of the controversy can be described by a few observations: and this, as the arguments appear to be essentially the same as those adduced on former occasions, will be amply sufficient for my present purpose.

The great body of the Baptist Preachers, laboring generally under the disadvantages of a limited and scanty education, naturally turned their attention in search of proofs for establishing their tenets to those sources which were within their reach. The general absence of classical attainments amongst them, and their affected contempt of human learning, led them to look upon the English translation of the New Testament as their ultimate authority in matters of criti-

cism. Hence resulted the developement and elucidation of that argument on which they look as the main pillar of their cause: namely—the example or practice of the Apostles. In every work on this side of the question, which I have perused, there is an evident anxiety to keep out of the reader's view any fact or circumstance which might lead his mind from the conclusion meant to be established. The writers do not exactly state unfair or unscriptural premises, but they state partial ones. They lead the reader along a narrow course, in which he has no room to look either to the right or the left, and bring him in an amazingly short period, to a point which they maintain to be undeniable. They want either the ability or the candour to stretch open before him the broad foundation of the Redeemer's fold, and allow him to exercise his own judgement as to the importance of the subjects which they press upon his attention. He is allowed no choice. He must either embrace their tenets, or acknowledge himself to suffer under the imputation of infidelity.

It is, however, pleasing to observe in the writings of the more recent Baptist authors, a diminution of that bitterness and rancorous spirit towards all other denominations, which are manifest in the productions of their elder controversialists. This is a decided improvement; inasmuch as it proves the existence of that charity and brotherly affection, which ought to influence the heart and the conduct of every sincere and humble follower of Jesus. Having relinquished the unconstitutional tenet of their creed, which refused obedience to the civil magistrate, and which involved its early supporters in so much trouble, they were al-

lowed to rank in the station, and to enjoy the privileges, of other dissenters. They received no molestation: their principles were permitted to find their own level: and thus it may be supposed they felt in their liberty of conscience that charity which thinketh no wrong, and found that peace of God which passeth all understanding. An exemplification not only of these assertions, but of every pious and christian virtue, may be found in the life and writings of the gifted and eloquent Robert Hall; whose liberality and truly christian sentiments and deportment endeared him to all who knew him, whatever may have been their peculiar creed or persuasion.

I will conclude this section by mentioning, for the benefit of those who may wish to obtain a more copious detail of the several incidents, which give character of the English Baptismal controversy, a few of those writers who have been engaged in it.

In defence of the Baptists there are Dr. Gill's *Answer to Mr. Towgood's Baptism of Infants, a reasonable service*; Dr. Stennett's *Remarks on the Christian Minister's reasons for administering Baptism by sprinkling or pouring of water*; Mr. Jenkin's *Inconsistency of Infant sprinkling with Christian Baptism, with religious usefulness, and with salvation by Christ alone*; Mr. Richard's *History of Antichrist, or Free thoughts on the corruption of Christianity*; Mr. Isaiah Bert's *Baptists vindicated*;— to which may be added, Booth's *Pædobaptism examined, on the principles, concessions and reasonings, of the most learned Pædobaptists.*

On the other side again, that is in favor of infant Baptism, the reader may consult Dr. Fleming's *Plea for Infants*, and the appendix, and his defence; Dr.

Taylor's *Covenant of Grace, and baptism, the token of it explained upon Scripture principles ;* Mr. Brekell's *Pædobaptism*, and *Pædobaptism defended ;* Dr. Addington's Christian Minister's *reasons for baptizing infants, and for administering the ordinance by sprinkling or pouring of water ;* Mr. Robins's edition of Mathew Henry's MS. *Treatise on Baptism ;* Dr. Edward William's *Antipædobaptism examined ;* together with an excellent little work, published in 1803, entitled *Infant Baptism vindicated, or an attempt to shew that anabaptism is unnecessary, and separation from the Church of England on that account unlawful.* By a clergyman of the Church of England.

The Baptist body has frequently been disturbed by internal divisions and differences on various minor points of faith and discipline. The result has been a subdivision into General Baptists, Particular Baptists, and Seventh-day Baptists. But as the several controversies which led to these unhappy divisions, concerned themselves more than other denominations of christians, they do not properly fall within the design of the present Treatise, and are therefore omitted.

SECTION 6.

THE CONTROVERSY IN AMERICA.

THE circumstances in which the inhabitants of a newly settled country are necessarily placed, seem to be peculiarly favorable to the growth and spread of the Anabaptist tenets. The settler retires into the wilderness, and endeavours by the sweat of his

brow to procure subsistence for himself and his rising family. His principal object being the attainment of a competency of worldly possessions, and a means of supporting his credit amongst his fellow men; he is unavoidably prevented by the cares attendant upon such pursuits, from giving that consideration to the interests of religion, and the concerns of the soul, which their importance imperiously claims from every individual of the human family. Years roll on: and as the distant settlement, for obvious reasons, is destitute of the means of religious instruction, except what the piety and care of parents may lead them to impart, the necessity of attending to, and benefitting by, the divine ordinances of christianity, is overlooked, and the blessed consequences deferred, it may be, for many generations. Thus young men and young women grow up in the total neglect of all the rites and sacraments of the Holy religion of Jesus; a contingency which, I admit, is more the result of necessity than of choice. Still the consequence is the same. A mind, habitually accustomed to look upon the duties of religion, as matters which may or may not be attended to, according to inclination, convenience, or the humour of the moment, will soon regard them, unless the grace of God intervene, as incumbrances, which it would fain omit altogether. This is the innate tendency of human nature.

But should the individual thus brought up be happily roused to a just sense of his own condition in the world, and of the value of his immortal soul, and of the salvation purchased by Christ: should he desire earnestly to flee from the wrath to come,—hunger and thirst after righteousness; and should he express a

wish to obtain, as a palpable and visible means of confirming his pious resolution, admittance into the Redeemer's fold by Baptism—this baptism must of course be adult baptism. Circumstances prevented the administration of it at an earlier period. It is still, however, christian baptism, and is no doubt considered by the recipient, as a happy means of establishing him in the faith, and of bringing him nigh unto God. A repetition of the divine ordinance, under similar circumstances, will naturally and through custom, induce the belief, that it is not only christian baptism, but the only baptism allowed by Scripture. Hence those who have entered the ark of Christ's church at an advanced period of their life, have a personal interest, a personal feeling, in maintaining that mode of admission to be perfectly scriptural ; a truth which, so far as I can learn, has never been controverted. But the uncharitable sentiments which all admit to be the offspring of human frailty and imperfection, and it may be a considerable share of the pride of the natural heart, have impelled them a step further, and led them to pronounce every other mode of administering the Sacrament in question, wrong and totally unscriptural. This is also the innate tendency of human nature.

For these reasons America, from its earliest settlement, has become, through circumstances which were unavoidable, the cradle and nourisher of Anabaptist principles. Accordingly we find that even amongst the pilgrim fathers there had crept in those who formed and became converts to such principles ; and ever since the cause has been regularly and gradually advancing. Whether its progress is mainly owing to the reasons above exemplified, or the internal excellence

of the system which is founded on it, I will leave the candid reader to determine for himself.

To trace with minuteness the several features which the controversy assumed in America, would lead me into details of a more particular or local character, which are certainly unnecessary towards the elucidation of my subject, and might prove tedious to those who may favour these sheets with a perusal. I am not aware from what I have read of their works, that the American controversialists have thrown any additional light upon the principal points of discussion. They have ventured, however, to lay more stress upon two points of the subject in debate, and have consequently given them more prominence in the course of argumentation, than is to be met with in the works of English Baptists. These are the concessions—or rather what they call the concessions of Pædobaptist writers, with regard to the usual meaning of certain words in the original Greek, and to the practice of the primitive christians; and the necessity of an absolute proof of faith in the candidate, before the administration of the ordinance.

Their mode of proceeding, consists in selecting a few words which are used by the inspired authors of the New Testament, in describing the ordinance of Baptism: such as the verb *Βαπτιζω*, and the preposition *Εϱγα*. A search is then commenced throughout all the Greek dictionaries, from Stephanus downwards, and only one meaning of either word is selected; and of course, that meaning is found to coincide exactly with their opinions. An anxious care however seems to be exercised, lest any of the other meanings of the vocables in question find their way into

their compositions; and thus destroy the natural effect upon the mind of the reader. The compilers of these Greek dictionaries, being men of great erudition, and Pædobaptists, are thus, by a partial and unfair mode of quotation, made to turn evidence against their own principles. And this is called the "concessions of the most learned Pædobaptists!"

With regard to the other point specified, their course of argument is nearly similar. They seize upon a few passages of Scripture where the performance or administration of the ordinance immediately follows the profession of faith which the individual to be baptized has been led to make in consequence of previous instruction or exhortation: such as the place where the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch is mentioned, or where the Philippian Jailer is exhorted to "repent and be baptized." These portions of Scripture, say they, prove that the recipient exercised faith before baptism,—an exercise which is incompatible with infancy; therefore the baptism of Infants is not only unscriptural but useless. While they enforce this conclusion with all the reasoning powers which they can possibly command, they do not notice any of those numerous passages, which might convey to the reader's mind even the least idea that an exception to this sweeping conclusion exists. As I will have occasion to recur to this particular more at large hereafter, it will be only requisite to state in this place, what has often been stated before,—that an endeavour to hold forth constantly a particular point of faith or doctrine as being of more importance than the Holy Scriptures declare it to be, is inconsistent with the awful responsibility which rests upon every Preacher to "divide rightly and impartially the word of life."

Another peculiarity which is visible in the works of American Baptist controversialists, is the small esteem in which they hold every species of classical acquirements. Indeed I have seen some works in which this feeling has been carried so far as to border upon absolute contempt. But such sentiments being the natural results of circumstances which are peculiar to every young country, and which the authors could not control, should be treated with leniency and consideration; inasmuch as none but those who have not enjoyed the advantages of a classical education themselves can for a moment entertain them. It is not therefore with the intention of making comparisons which might shew in an unfavourable light the works of American Baptists, that I would remark that Dr. Gale, in his Book against Wall, has brought much more erudition and controversial skill to the task than can be discovered in the productions of Mr. Pond; and that Abraham Booth has displayed more candour and ability than Mr. Pengilly. My only object is to state undisguisedly my own impressions. It is satisfactory however to perceive that, within late years, the leaders of the Baptist denomination have given their sanction to the diffusion of general knowledge among their Preachers; and that a laudable exertion for the attainment of classical acquirements is manifested in their Schools and Academies.

In these measures their Pædobaptist brethren see much cause of satisfaction. Their consequences will be of great benefit and advantage not only to the Baptists themselves, but to their general system of Church Government. An extensive acquaintance with the

learning of ancient and modern times will expand their minds, and enable them to take that view of their peculiar doctrine, which, if it will not alter their opinion, will at least render their sentiments more charitable towards their Christian brethren. They will hence perceive the broad foundation on which other Churches build their faith, and the very limited one on which their own cause of separation is founded. From such knowledge the happiest results may be anticipated. Examples are on record,—examples too of late occurrence,—which fully justify these assertions. I allude particularly to the case of Professor Stuart of Andover, who, having been brought up in the principles of the Antipædobaptists, relinquished them in his maturer years, after the most patient and laborious enquiry which a vigorous and powerful intellect could bestow on the subject. In the same class may be mentioned Mr. William Elder, who was not only brought up in those principles, but spent many years of his life in their dissemination as a Baptist Preacher. On a patient enquiry and investigation of the foundation on which the Baptist superstructure is reared, he was convinced of their insuffiency,—voluntarily resigned a numerous charge,—and left the communion of the Baptist Church.

The secession of this latter gentleman gave rise to a controversy, which before I conclude this section may be briefly noticed.

It was commenced by the publication of a series of letters, which were addressed to his former congregations, and contained not only his reasons for separation, but an able explanation of the Sacrament of Christian Baptism. This production may be charac-

terized as a brief Defence of Infant Baptism, written in a clear style and Christian spirit.

Mr. Crawley of Halifax followed. His Pamphlet, which is large, may be called a piece of good special pleading on the other side of the question. It goes over the usual arguments; applying them to the peculiar circumstances of the case in which the Author was placed. In the conclusion of the work is the most reprehensible part. Evidently in imitation of Mr. Wall, the Author offers a general address to all Christians on the subject: but unlike that sound Divine, whose entreaty is for union, Mr. Crawley advises and enforces separation! No man who has thoroughly investigated the history of the Church universal, and who takes an interest in the progress of Christianity throughout the world, can hesitate for a moment to pronounce these attempts to produce separation among Christian bodies, and to unsettle the faith of individuals, to be the result of other motives than those which ought to distinguish a humble and diligent labourer in the Lord's vineyard. The superstructure of the Christian Church contains already many rents and fissures, but let us hope that none of them will reach the foundation, or endanger the safety of those within. But if the unholy hands of worldly ambition are once permitted to wield the intruments of destruction against the sacred edifice, there is no saying where the fissure may stop, or what part of the foundation may be secure.

On the continuation of this controversy, I have no other remark to make, than to express my regret that the importance of the points under discussion has been lost sight of, as is too often unhappily the case, in per-

sonalities and abusive recrimination. Such are the results of human frailty: indeed they are the admitted results of human frailty. And it grieves to the heart the sincere Christian, whose only object is to obtain information, to see the dignity of the controversialist compromised, by descending to dwell upon those imperfections of his opponent, which are equally attributable not only to himself, but to every son of mortality.

CHAPTER II.

SCRIPTURE EVIDENCE FOR BAPTISM.

SECTION 1.

PASSAGES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT, WHICH MENTION THE USE OF WATER AS A MEANS OF SPIRITUAL PURIFICATION.

In contemplating the nature and object of water baptism, the attentive reader will be led to search for information, with regard to the origin and earlier observance of that ordinance, by which John the forerunner of the Messiah, put the seal of repentance upon his followers. Grave reflection, on the circumstances under which this ordinance was introduced, and on the effect which its administration produced in the minds of the people, will naturally suggest the enquiry, what is the origin of using water as a religious ceremony? We find no command recorded, by which the Forerunner of Messiah was laid under any obligation to use water, or this means, as a sign of repentance, more than any other substance. And we know that the Mahometans of the African deserts, make use of sand, and sprinkle it over their persons, as a sym-

bol of religious purification.* How comes it therefore that John the Baptist began to baptize all those who went out to him from Jerusalem, and the country round about, in the river of Jordan, as a sign or symbol of repentance, and means of spiritual blessing?

To this question, an answer, sufficient to satisfy the superficial enquirer, may be found in the fact that John was an inspired person; and that he might have acted under the immediate direction of the spirit, although, for wise reasons, the express words which contained his authority, are withheld in the Scriptures. To the more accurate enquirer however this fact, regarding the spiritual qualifications of the Forerunner, will not appear of sufficient extent in a practical point or view, to account for the consequences which resulted from it. For we may readily discover, from the context of the sacred narrative, that the minds of the people were perfectly familiarized to this ceremony. They make no enquiry, they receive no instruction, about the method of performance. They bear their part in the ordinance, as if they had been well acquainted with its nature, tendency and signification. The personal inspiration of the preacher of repentance, is insufficient to account for the previous familiarity with baptism which is thus apparent in the conduct of the multitude. Hence a question will naturally arise;—whence could they have obtained this previous knowledge?—this previous acquaintance with a custom, which was confessedly introduced amongst them by the Baptist, in a new signification, and as the beginning of a purer order of things?

*See Robbins Journal of his captivity—passim.

The answer is: that the minds of the Jewish people were made familiar with the use of water, as a means or sign of spiritual purification, by the frequent washings and ablutions which the mosaic ritual prescribed. It is admitted that the great body of the nation, were totally ignorant of that loftier and more glorious meaning which the mission of John had stamped upon this religious ordinance: of this indeed they could not have obtained distinct information, till he came among them. But that they were in the habit of frequently using this mode of spiritual purification, can be easily made apparent from various passages of the Old Testament.

The High Priest, previously to his entering into the holy of holies, to make atonement for the sins of the people, was enjoined to purify himself with water. "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his Sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water that they die not. * * * * And it shall be a statute forever to them."—Exod: xxx. 17—20.

The people likewise, in cases of a particular description, were made subject to an obligation of a similar nature. "And every soul that eateth that which died of itself, or that which was torn with beasts, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger; he shall both wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean. But if he wash them not nor bathe his flesh; then shall he bear his iniquity.—Levit: xvii. 15. 16.

This religious ceremony was to be particularly observed in the case of leprosy. The afflicted individual was to submit himself to the spiritual guidance of the Priest, who was directed to perform the ceremony of purification, by means of two birds and a vessel running over with water. "And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water that he may be clean." Levit: xiv. 8. In conformity to this injunction we find that the Hebrew prophet, after the lapse of a period of nearly 600 years, recommended a similar ablution to the Syrian Naaman, who was a heathen and a stranger to the common wealth of Israel, and who had come from a far country to seek a cure for his leprosy. "And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, go, and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." II Kings v. 10.

In this enumeration may also be included, all those whose intention it might be to offer worship or prayers to Jehovah. "And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people: and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, be ready against the third day." Exod. xix. 14, 15. To this practice reference is made in I Sam. xvi. 5. "And Samuel said * * * * * I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord. Sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." The Apostle likewise, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, uses expressions which are evidently meant to allude to this injunction. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts *sprinkled* from an evil conscience, and our bodies *washed* with pure water." Heb. x. 22.

The Jews, be it observed, had two sorts of washing; one of the whole body by immersion, which was used by the Priests at their consecration, and frequently in cases of leprosy; the other of the hands or feet, called *dipping* or *pouring of water*, and which was of daily use not only for the hands and feet, but also for the cups and other vessels used at their meals. To these observances occasional reference is made in the New Testament. "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread." Mat. xv. 2. see also Mark vii. 3. 4. And the six water pots of stone, used at the marriage feast of Cana, in Galilee, were undoubtedly set for this purpose. John ii. 6. To these two modes of purification Jesus Christ seems to allude in that passage of John's Gospel which records his washing the disciples' feet. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." John xiii. 10.

The prophets of Israel, in their exhortations to the people, beautifully introduce metaphorical references to the religious ablutions prescribed in their Law. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well." Isaiah. i. 16. "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved." Jerem. iv. 14. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." Ezek. xxxvi. 25. These and various other passages, too numerous to mention, plainly indicate that the Jewish people were not only well accustomed to the use of religious lustrations of several descrip-

tions, but fully understood their nature and signification. It is true that much of the purity of the Hebrew worship had disappeared from the service of the Temple in the time of John the Baptist, and that the traditions of the elders had in many instances supplanted the authority of the Levitical ritual; yet it cannot be contested that amidst all their errors they well knew the several rites and ceremonies of the worship of their fathers. And thus it may rationally be concluded that the Baptism with which John had commenced his ministry, was a ceremony that, under a different name and another meaning, had long been familiar to their minds.

It is curious to observe the prevalence which religious ablutions obtained in the worship and ceremonies of the heathen nations of antiquity. The mythological codes of Greece and Rome more especially enjoined the observance of these lustrations.

The Greeks we are told were so rigid in the performance of this custom, that at some of their solemnities the priests and priestesses were obliged to declare upon oath that they were duly purified. Every person who attended the solemn sacrifices was purified by water, which was placed at the door of the temple, and consecrated by putting into it a burning torch, that had been taken from the Altar. The same implement was sometimes used in the sprinkling those who entered their temples, as may be established by the following line from the Eirene of Aristophanes:

"Bring the torch, and taking it I will purify."

Instead of torches they sometimes used a branch of laurel, or olive:—

"Idem ter socios pura circumtulit unda,
Spargens rore levi et ramo felicis olivae."

ÆNEAD VI. 229.

"Old Corynæus compassed thrice the crew,
And dipped an olive branch in holy dew,
Which thrice he sprinkled round."—*Dryden.*

Before the worshipers sacrificed to the celestial Gods, they washed their whole bodies: but before they performed the sacred rites to other deities, a sprinkling of water was sufficient. This custom was also observed in the lesser parts of divine worship, as well as at solemn sacrifices. Hector was afraid of making a libation to Jupiter before he had washed:—

"With unwashed hands I dread to bring
My off'ring to the heavenly king."

Hom. Iliad. t. i. *v.* 266.

In the Odyssey, Telemachus is represented as performing the same ceremony, before he ventured to pray to the Gods. By thus washing themselves, the Greeks believed that they were purified from their sins.

The ancient Romans, whose worship and mythology were intimately connected with those of Greece, practised ceremonies of a similar nature. For in sacrifices it was requisite that those who offered them, should come chaste and pure; that they should bathe themselves, be dressed in white robes, and crowned with the leaves of that tree, which was thought most acceptable to the god whom they worshipped. The same difference which the Greeks observed in worship ping the celestial and infernal deities of their dark heathenism, were likewise attended to by the Romans:

as the reader may ascertain by reading the whole passage of the VI. book of the Ænead, from which two lines have already been quoted, and by referring to the *Tusculan Questions of Cicero*, II. 25.

These remarks on the religious lustrations of the ancient Greeks and Romans, are not introduced with any view to connect or even to compare heathen ordinances with the Christian Sacrament of Baptism ; but to shew the universal prevalence of the use of water, as a means of typical purification from sin. I will not stop to enquire from what common source, or direction, or custom, the practice in question, and the notion generally attached to it, could have possibly taken their rise. Nor will I pursue the subject further in this place, than to observe, how manifestly the wisdom and providence of God are conspicuous, in appointing as the initiating sacrament of the religion of his beloved Son, a rite to which the minds not only of the Jews, but even of the heathen, were perfectly familiarized from long use ! For in this way the progress of the Gospel must have been greatly facilitated ; as no explanation seemed to be necessary to bring the meaning of its first and initiating rite down to the level of the capacities of the multitude. They partly understood its meaning and tendency from their former religious practices. A door was thus opened to their understanding for the admission of the everlasting seed of the Gospel, which in due time "brought forth some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold."

SECTION 2.

THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.

EACH of the four Evangelists has noticed the commencement of John's ministry by baptizing the multitudes in the wilderness of Judea. The following passages, selected in connexive narration from the Gospel, will be found to contain the most prominent particulars of the Baptist's mission, and of the mode in which he appears to have administered the initiatory lustration.

Matt. III. 1. In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea.

Mark I. 4. John did baptize in the wilderness,

Luke III. 3. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Matt. III. 2. And saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mark I. 2. As it is written in the prophets, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Luke III. 4. As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Luke III. 5. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;

Luke III. 6. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Matt. III. 4. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

Mark I. 5. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem,

Matt. III. 5. And all the region round about Jordan,

Matt. III. 6. And were

Mark I. 5. all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

Matt. III. 7. But when he saw many of the Pharasees and Sadducees come to his baptism—

Luke III. 7. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him—

Matt. III. 7. he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Matt. III. 8. Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

- - 9. And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our Father: for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

- - 10. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.

Luke III. 10. And the people asked him, saying, what shall we do then?

- - 11. He answereth and saith unto them, he that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat let him do likewise.

Luke III. 12. Then came also the publicans to be baptized, and said unto him,—Master, what shall we do?

- - 13. And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

- - 14. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

- - 15. And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not;

- - 16. John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you,—

Mark I. 8. have baptized you with water

Matt. III. 11. unto repentance, but

Mark I. 7. there cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose;

Matt. III. 11. whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

- - 12. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Luke III. 18. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

To any one who peruses this narrative with attention, two things will appear sufficiently evident; one is—that the people or multitude who are here represented to have been baptized, were grown up persons: and the other—that the mode or manner in

which the Sacrament was administered, is not directly specified.

The former inference will receive further confirmation from the following remarks:—

At the appearance of John the Baptist as a preacher of repentance, a belief very generally prevailed throughout the land of Judea, that the time had come when some great and remarkable personage, of whom the ancient prophets had foretold, should appear in the world. All Palestine was then subject to the Roman power, and the city of Jerusalem was degraded from the rank of a metropolis, to become the Capital of a Province. The Jews groaned under the Roman yoke, and wished and prayed for deliverance. Hence their general idea of the power and office of a Messiah was,—that he should appear amongst them as a rich and powerful temporal Prince, who would lead their armies forth to battle and victory; and thus free them from the yoke of a foreign dominion. And so deeply rooted in the minds of the nation was this idea, that even our Lord's disciples, after they had seen proofs and acknowledged that he was the son of God, cherished the hope that he would restore the kingdom to Israel. *Acts* i. 6.

The people of Jerusalem, Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, led by this expectation, crowded to John's baptism for the twofold purpose of beholding the commencement of that order of things which might restore the ancient freedom of their nation, and of qualifying themselves by purification, to participate in its privileges and blessings. And the Pharisees and Sadducees were no doubt sadly disappointed when they found their ambition checked, and their hypoc-

risy unmasked, by being assured that the kingdom of heaven, which was declared to be at hand, consisted not in outward ceremonies and observances, but in the inward purification of the heart. The questions which many proposed, with a view to elicit further information with regard to the line of conduct which they were to pursue under the new dynasty, sufficiently prove the intense interest which the subject had excited among all classes of society.

In all these movements we perceive the influence of a rational and penetrating judgment, stimulated into action by the force of circumstances, and led on by the hope of gaining some advantage. But this act of the understanding could only operate so powerfully in individuals who had attained the years of maturity. Hence we naturally conclude that those who submitted to the baptism of John were adults,—persons who had arrived at the age of discretion.

The other fact, observable in the narration of John's ministry,—namely, that the mode or manner in which the Sacrament was administered, is not directly specified,—will likewise admit of further illustration.

It is no where said, that he took those who had confessed their sins, one by one, and immerged them in the river: neither is it stated that he took a vessel and poured the water on their heads, or that he merely sprinkled a few drops of the purifying element about their persons. It is merely said that he "baptized them in the river of Jordan."

Now it will be readily perceived, that if the word "*baptize*" had any fixed and determinate meaning in the original, there would be no difficulty in coming to a decided conclusion on this subject. If the verb

used in this instance by the Evangelists, meant *to dip, to plunge*, and nothing else, we should know exactly how John's baptism had been administered; or if it invariably signified *to wash,—to sprinkle*, the case would have been equally clear. But the truth is, that the word in question has all these significations, and moreover bears them in various parts of the Bible and Testament; as shall be shown by and bye. The rational and the only logical conclusion, which, under these circumstances, we can come to, is that we are *uncertain* as to the mode of Baptism or the administration of it in this particular case.

But the Antipædobaptists say—No. It is *certain* that immersion was the mode. And in proof of this opinion, they adduce what they call the concessions of Pædobaptist Lexicographers, who give *immerge,—to plunge* or *dip*—as the meaning of the word *baptize:* but with a degree of unfairness and partiality, which cannot be too strongly reprobated, they suppress the other meanings of the verb in question, which are likewise given by the same men.*

They further infer the same certainty from another source; referring to the *reason* that John baptized at Ænon. "And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, *because there was much water there.*"—John III. 23. Here say the Baptists we have proof positive that immersion was used: for any quantity of water, however small, would have answered all the other modes of baptizing but immersion of the whole person of the recipient.

It is however remarkable, how very little force this argument bears with it. For be it observed, that

* See Booth's Pædobaptism examined—passim.

Jordan contained as much water as could be found at Ænon, and yet, as we have seen, it cannot be satisfactorily proved that the Baptist administered the ordinance there by immersion. No evidence can be adduced in favor of dipping in either case, beyond what Mr. Gambier* calls the *third* degree of probability,—which is certainly of too slight a character to be admitted as the foundation of an article of Christian Faith.

I am inclined, therefore, to think that the meaning of the words—"*because there was much water there*," refers to the regular supply of water which was to be found at Ænon at that particular season of the year. For it was then considerably after the festival of the Jewish Passover, and the dry season had set in; so that, as is the case even unto this day, every place in Judea, which was not more than ordinarily supplied with water, had been dried up. And John baptized there "because he found much water in it or near it, in comparison to what he could find in any other part of that neighbourhood." It is concluded, therefore, that hitherto we have discovered nothing *certain* as to the mode of Baptism.

Finally, it may be observed that the baptism which was administered by John, can afford no precedence for Christian Baptism, except in as far as the manner of performance, which is so doubtful, is concerned.—For John was merely the harbinger of the new dispensation,—the stepping stone between the Jewish and Christian dispensations,—having one foot under the dynasty of the Mosaic Law, and the other in the knigdom of the Redeemer. Consequently, com-

* See Gambier's Moral Evidence, p. 5.

mentators do not attach so much importance to his mode of administration as they otherwise might have done. And our Saviour himself has declared that the least in the kingdom of heaven—meaning his Church on earth—was greater than John the Baptist. Matt. xi. 11. On the same authority the reader will find the difference between John's baptism and the Christian ordinance set forth in Acts i. 5. "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

SECTION 3.

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST—HIS ADMINISTRATION OF IT—HIS COMMISSION TO THE APOSTLES.

Mark i. 9. "And it came to pass in those days,

Luke iii. 21. when all the people were baptized,

Mark i. 9. that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee

Matt. iii. 13. to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

- - 14. But John forbid him, saying:—I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

- - 15. And Jesus answering said unto him, suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him:

Mark i. 9. And he was baptized of John in Jordan.

Matt. iii. 16. And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

Matt. III. 17. And lo, a voice from heaven saying :— This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,"

Here, as before, the mode of administration is the only thing referred to, that bears particularly on our present enquiry. But, like the passages already examined, we do not find anything certain that may lead us to form a conclusive opinion on the subject. It has indeed been urged as an argument in favour of immersion, that Jesus, after having been baptized, "*came up out of the water*;" which seems to imply that he must have been in it. On the other hand, it has been answered, that these words do not necessarily mean thus much ; but may be applied merely to his coming up the bank of the river from the edge of the water. This matter, however, is of less importance than the end or object which our Saviour had in view, in submitting to the Baptism of John, and which is thus beautifully described by Witsius :—

"Christ was baptized of John not of necessity, not for his own sake, but for ours. He was baptized that he might confer honour on John, sanction his ministry, and commend it to the doubting Jews. By this act, he made himself the head of all, who by baptism confess their sins, and are admitted into the Church. He sanctified baptism by thus subjecting himself to it, that man might not despise it as an useless and unmeaning ceremony."*

On the same subject Dr. Lightfoot remarks :—

"It was proper that our Great High Priest, when admitted into his ministerial office, should answer the type of the admission of the Levitical priests, who were initiated by anointing and by baptism. Also, since by

* See Miscel Sacr : vol II. p. 537.

the institution of Christ, those that entered into the profession of the Gospel were to be introduced by baptism, it was proper that Christ being to enter on the same profession, and to preach it, should be admitted by the same rite." *Com. in loc.*

The only mention which is made in Scripture of our Saviour's administration of this ordinance may be found in the following passage:—

After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came and were baptized." John III. 22. 23.

John III. 26. And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

- - 27. John answered and said, a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.

- - 28. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

- - 30. He must increase, but I must decrease.

John IV. 1. When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard, that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John.

- - (Though Jesus himself baptized not but his disciples.)

John IV 3. He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee."

This passage is quoted, not so much for the purpose of elucidating the subject of our enquiry, more satisfactorily than other passages already referred to, but because it forms a link in the chain of the Scripture evidence for Baptism. Our Saviour, as in the instance of his own baptism, conferred honour and dignity on the sacrament by his presence, and by administering it through the medium of his disciples. By this means he instructs christians in all ages of the church, to pay particular reverence to that ordinance, and to receive it gladly as a means of salvation. Here too the last testimony which John gave to the divine mission of Christ is recorded; seemingly for the purpose of contrasting in a public manner their views with regard to this particular, and of convincing the people of the heavenly authority, and benevolent and merciful design, with which our Redeemer exercised his ministry.

The scene of these transactions was Ænon; a city of the Province of Samaria. It appears to have been situated on the Jordan at the foot of Mount Gilboa: so that the πολλα ὑδατα—*much water*,—on which the Baptists lay so great a weight, must either refer to the waters of the Jordan or to something less; to ponds or perpetual springs. Indeed the word *Ænon* does actually mean a *place of springs*, whose waters may have been preferred on account of their coolness. But certainly if immersion was the mode practised on this occasion, the argument adduced to prove the circumstance is insufficient.*

Let it be understood, however, that it is not my object to prove that immersion was not used by John and

* See Valpy's note in Joc. and Dr. Well's Geography of the Scriptures, vol. II. p. 167.

the disciples of our Saviour,—for this I am not inclined to dispute,—but to shew that the reasons adduced by Baptist writers to prove the contrary are not in this instance of much weight. For until it can be proved beyond dispute,—beyond even a doubt or suspicion of its accuracy, that *to baptize* means nothing more or less, than to *immerge*, or *plunge*, or *dip*, all the arguments brought forward on their side of the question, from each of the passages above quoted, must prove of little or no avail. For they rest solely on the *supposition* that the idea of putting the body of the recipient under water, is the only legitimate meaning of the verb in question.

We now come to a more important branch of the Scripture evidence of Baptism. Hitherto we have gone over passages which appear to refer solely to the baptizing of grown-up persons,—of men who could reason, and calculate, and understand, the object and end of the ordinance. We have seen no sufficient reason in the word of God to induce us to take part with the Antipædobaptists for exclusive immersion, or to support the Presbyterians in their opinion that sprinkling or pouring was the only mode used. Neither opinion can be made sufficiently apparent without doing violence to the well known, and generally received meaning of words; and without wresting some passages from their natural signification, and overlooking others because they seem to speak differently. This will be found, I doubt not, upon a fair and candid examination of Scripture, and the glosses of either party, to be the most rational conclusion that an unbiassed judgment can possibly adopt. The mode of administration is left undetermined, further than that we are very

certain it was dipping, sprinkling, or pouring; because, no doubt, it was, and appears to be still, a matter of secondary consideration: but the end or design of the ordinance itself is always expressly specified; because it is the principal object to be attended to by all who wish for the salvation of their souls through the merits of Jesus Christ and him crucified.

John baptized in the wilderness of Judea; and his object was to shew the people that the kingdom of Him, who was to come after him, could not be entered without remission of sins and purification of heart, both of which were signified by baptism with water. Jesus Christ submitted to this ordinance to fulfil all righteousness; at the same time assuming the office of his public ministry. And both baptized at Ænon, not only with these intentions, but with the further purpose of terminating the ministry of the Baptist in that of the Messiah. For it was here that John gave his last testimony to the divine origin, and consequently the superiority over his own, of our Redeemer's office on earth. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly, because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." *John* III. 29.

I would not therefore think it worth my while to enter into a controversy with any person, about the mode of administering the ordinance of baptism. And in as far as we have hitherto examined the New Testament, we see cause for admitting to its fullest extent, the opinion of the Antipædobaptists, that it was administered only to grown up persons. But we now come to a passage with regard to which we totally differ from them, and in which we find the rule and authority for admit-

ting Infants to the Church of Christ by baptism. It is the commission of our Saviour to his apostles, delivered immediately before his ascension into heaven.

Mark xvi. 15. And he said unto them,

Matt. xxviii. 18. all power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth.

- - 19. Go ye therefore,

Mark xvi. 15. Go ye into all the world,

Matt. xxviii. 19. and teach all nations;

Mark xvi. 15. and preach the Gospel to every creature,

Matt. xxviii. 19. baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

- - 20. Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you:

Mark xvi. 16. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.

- - 17. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

- - 18. They shall take up serpents: and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them: they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover;

Matt. xxviii. 20. and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Mark xvi. 19. So then after the Lord had spoken to them,

Luke xxiv. 50. he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

- - 51. And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven,

Acts i. 9. and a cloud received him out of their sight;

Mark xvi. 19. he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God."

Much has been written concerning the import of these words, and their authority or evidence for Baptism on both sides of the controversy. The Pædobaptists refer to them as one of their authorities for administering that ordinance in the case of infants, and assign the following as their principal reason for doing so: First the command to "*teach and baptize all nations*" is one of a general character; not clearly specifying at what age persons should be made disciples of Christ, and therefore including infants, who make up a large proportion of the inhabitants of every nation: because it is the manifest tendency and spirit of the Gospel to "*open wide the gates*" of salvation. Secondly the words used by St. Matthew—"*teach all nations, baptizing them,*"—mean, according to the known and received rules of criticism, in both the original and English languages, that the teaching and baptizing were commanded to be performed and commenced simultaneously, and that because teaching is a work of more labour than baptism, the administration of the ordinance must, on every principle of reason and common sense, have preceded the instruction of the recipients.

The Antipædobaptists strongly protest against this mode of reasoning: for, say they, it is necessary that the recipient be first a believer and then be baptized; because St. Matthew puts the word *teach* before *baptizing*, and St. Mark the word *believeth* before *baptizeth*: but of an act of faith an infant is incapable: therefore,

they conclude, he is unfit for receiving the ordinance of baptism.

The above is I believe a correct abstract of the reasoning and conclusions which the passage under consideration suggests on both sides of the question. The reader will be able to form sound judgment as to which is nearer the truth by contemplating the following particulars.

Our Saviour's command is, as just observed, general in its character, and applies to all ages of the Church, as well as to all nations. But in as far as the Apostles, to whom it was immediately addressed, were concerned, it applied only to the land of Judea and some of the heathen places bordering upon it. This was the whole extent of nations to which its operation was carried in the days of the Apostles, if we except Paul's journeys to Greece and Rome.

Now the first care of the Apostles on their going forth for the purpose of converting the nations from the evil of their ways, in compliance with their master's command, would naturally be, to instruct their hearers in the mysteries of redemption. They would suit their mode of speaking to the character of their audience; address them in the language that was best understood by them; and bring conviction home to their hearts by reference to their native worship, their feelings and their reason, as men capable of judging for themselves. In tracing out their proceedings throughout the Acts of the Apostles, we find this to be invariably the case. The Jews were convinced by reference to their law and their worship—*See Acts* i. 15. &c. *and Heb. passim*—and the Greeks received instruction according to their own peculiar notions

of Mythology.—*Acts* xvii. 22. Being convinced in this way of the truth of the Gospel, and of the efficacy of the death and sufferings of Christ, as a means of reconciliation with God, the people, both Jews and Greeks, were admitted into the ark of Christ's Church by baptism: and in no case do we find this rule to be deviated from. It never is denied, therefore, by the most scrupulous Pædobaptist, that only adults were baptized in the first instance, and that a believing mind was a necessary preparation to the ordinance in the first converts. All this we readily admit.

For if we except the power of working miracles, the "Ambassadors for Christ" are at this very time promoting his blessed Gospel, by the very means here described. In heathen countries, where the sound of salvation has never been heard, and where all the popular notions of the people are grounded on customs and traditions peculiar to their own nation, that missionary would not certainly advance with the most speed who began to plant a new doctrine and a new religion in their hearts, by indiscriminately baptizing old and young that would comply, whether they understood the nature of the ordinance or not. The aged and the wise and the influential must have first been convinced by the power and force of reasoning, which is understood by all people; and when their judgments were swayed to belief in the Gospel, and they expressed a wish to be admitted into Christ's kingdom on earth, the ordinance of baptism could be readily administered, both as a sign of inward purification from sin, and as a means of salvation. Such precisely must we suppose the progress of the Apostles to have been; the only difference being, their superior

power of enforcing conviction of their divine mission, by working miracles.

But then we maintain that they did not stop here, or rest satisfied with having baptized the believing adult only. We say that if the person so believing had any children, or others under his protection, they were received by the apostles as fit recipients for the Sacrament on the faith of their guardian. And this point we prove in the following manner, from the passage which we are at present considering.

1. Any one who reads the original with attention, will at once perceive that there is an evident distinction between μαθητευσατε—*teach*—in the nineteenth verse, and διδασκοντες *teaching*—in the twentieth verse, (*Matt.* xxviii.)—a distinction which has not been observed in our translation. There are manifestly three things, which our Lord here distinctly enjoins his apostles to execute with regard to the nations, including not merely the Jews, but also the Gentiles. These are expressed by the words μαθητευσατε, *Βαπτιζοντες*, and διδασκοντες which in their literal meaning, may be rendered thus :—"make disciples,—baptizing,—and teaching them, &c."

Now if this combination of terms has any meaning at all, it must mean that the apostles were in the first place to make disciples by baptizing them ; and, in the second place, as a necessary consequence of that act, to teach them all the duties of the Christian life. That the literal meaning of μαθητευω is to *make disciples*, may be proved by reference to *Matt.* xiii. 52 : and to *Acts.* xiv. 21. where the marginal reading of our New Testament is— "*had made many disciples.*"

Hence if the Apostles did not at any time make disciples, by baptizing, and afterwards instructing them, they could not have possibly fulfilled their blessed Master's injunction;—they could not have complied with his command. But, as we have already seen, the circumstances in which they were placed, and the nature of the case, render it extremely improbable that they would have adopted this mode of proceeding in the instance of adult Baptism. Consequently Infant baptism is the only case in which, according to the literal meaning of the words used by the Evangelist, and the reason of the attendant circumstances, the command of our Saviour could be immediately applicable. We are then come to one of two conclusions: either the Apostles did or did not baptize infants. If they did, they fulfilled the spirit of this parting injunction of their Master: if they did not, they manifestly disobeyed it. Which of these alternatives the Apostles were most likely to adopt, I will leave it with the reader to determine.

2. Again, we believe that the Apostles baptized infants: because the idea of admitting children into covenant with God, in virtue of the faith of their parents, was well understood by the Jews, in every period of their nation's history. Their Talmudists tell us that their established practice was invariably to baptize or sprinkle with water the children of Proselytes to their faith. And it was well known that the child who was circumcised according to their law, had no other previous title to the covenant of promise, than what his descent from Abraham conferred.

Accustomed to consider these practices, not only as wholesome ceremonies enjoined by the laws of their

Forefathers, but as rites dictated by true piety and religious feeling on the part of the parents, the Apostles would have naturally understood their heavenly Master's command in reference to these acknowledged points of faith, with regard to the admission of children into covenant with God. They would thus consider themselves authorised to receive infants on the belief and conversion of the parents, into the ark of Christ's Church; being convinced from experience that such practice was recognized by the law of Moses, which was a shadow of the Gospel. And they knew besides that the shadow could not exist without the substance; that circumcision would not have been so strictly enjoined on the descendants of the faithful Abraham, if it was not a type or representation of Christian Baptism.

I am well aware that against this mode of reasoning it may be said—that if St. Matthew's words apply only to Infants, the Apostles disobeyed them in baptizing adults *after instruction.* This however is not a necessary consequence. The command "*make disciples*"—is a general injunction to bring to the faith of Christ all—old and young—among whom they were sent, by the means of proselytizing and initiation, which were well understood, by almost every inhabitant of Palestine, in those days. They therefore made disciples of grown up persons by working miracles and by *preaching*—(St. Mark's expression) to them, and baptizing them; and of children, who from their tender age were incapable of understanding those things, by simply baptizing them: that thus the salvation of the Lord God might come unto all people.

On this passage of Scripture Dr. Macknight observes as follows:—"In our Lord's discourses, the twelve are to be considered sometimes as apostles, in which character they had no successors; sometimes as Ministers of the Gospel, in which character they have many successors; and sometimes as disciples simply or private Christians. In this commission our Lord considers the twelve only as ordinary ministers of his religion, and therefore in addressing them he spoke to all their successors. In any other sense, he could not be with the apostles unto the end of time. Nor could they teach and baptize all nations in any other sense."

The point attempted to be illustrated in the above observations will become more apparent in the following section.

SECTION 4.

BAPTISM BY THE APOSTLES.

After our Saviour's ascension into heaven, the Apostles, in virtue of the commission which they had received from him, began, as soon as circumstances permitted, to fulfil the command which that commission enjoined. Their first attempt at making disciples took place at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, when a vast multitude of the Jews was collected from all parts, to observe that great festival. The circumstances and consequences of their exertions, are thus related by St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles:—

Acts III. 37. "Now when they heard this"—viz. Peter's discourse—"they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

- - 38. Then Peter said unto them—repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

- - 39. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

- - 41. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them three thousand souls."

In this passage is related the powerful effect produced by Peter's sermon, aided as it was by the performance of miracles, and signs, and mighty works. Conviction of the heavenly origin of his mission and office, and of the truth as it is in Jesus, was, by these means, enforced upon their understandings. They were roused from their stupor, and the lethargy, as to spiritual things, in which the works of the Law had naturally bound them. They then were compelled to cry out, men and brethren *what shall we do?* Peter tells them to repent and be baptized.

Now in all this we perceive merely the effect of the Apostles' endeavour to obey that part of his Master's command, which is expressed by the word μαδητευσατε —make disciples. But in order to turn this favourable state of mind to the eternal advantage of their immortal souls, the Apostle exhorts them to repentance, and at the same time to baptism. Hence we perceive that the immediate conviction which led them to *enquire*

was considered as a sufficient evidence of their faith and consequently as a title to Baptism. An act of repentance could scarcely have preceded the administration of the Sacrament: for we are given to understand that these very people were baptized the same day; and we know that *repentance* is not complete until it *bring forth fruits meet for repentance.*—*Matt.* III. 8. Consequently the most important part of the repentance here enjoined must have been performed *subsequently* to the administration of the ordinance of Baptism. And this consideration is, I submit with deference, a sufficient proof that repentance, in the meaning attached to that term, by the Antipædobaptists, is not in every case necessary—absolutely necessary—as a previous preparation; a remark which will in a great measure answer their objection to the admission of Infants to this ordinance, because of their inability to repent or perform any other duty, of a purely mental character.

Hence the initiatory ceremony or rite, necessarily went before the duties of the christian life. And if the rule is applicable in the case of adults, who became disciples, not by repentance, or penitence, but by reason of the miracles which they saw, and the truths which they heard, it cannot most assuredly be violated in the case of infants, who are in the beginning of life, and who, under divine grace, will have an opportunity of performing all the duties appertaining to their sacred calling when they come to years of discretion. The Apostle required no further proof of the conversion of his hearers than their expressed wish to be saved; and told them that as a means of salvation they must be baptized. In the same way the christian minister now

administers this sacrament to infants at the desire and request of the Parent, who in this case has alone the right to decide and choose.

After this exhortation to repent and be baptized, the apostle enforces it by assuring them that the "*Promise is unto them and their children.*" They were induced to comply with his admonition, not only because they would thus receive remission of their sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost ; but because in virtue of their descent from Abraham and the prophets, they had a natural title to all the benefits of the new covenant. The promise spoken of here is undoubtedly that which was given to Abraham, when he was called upon by God to leave his native land and to go he knew not whither. It is stated in the twelfth chapter of Genesis, verse 3,—"And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed ;" and evidently refers to the coming of the Son of man into the world. In the III Cap. of the Acts the same subject is again alluded to in these words—25—which will clearly enough explain the meaning of the passage under consideration : "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our Fathers, saying unto Abraham and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." The promise then is neither more nor less than the promise of salvation through the redemption purchased by Christ.

The Apostle, in the passage before us, states, that this promise is not only to the grown up persons who heard him, but also to their children of whatever age they might happen to be ;—in other words that the children were qualified to enjoy all the blessings and privileges which were attached to the promise of salvation. And

if they were qualified for the reception of this mark of heavenly favour, who shall pretend to deny that they were fit subjects for the ordinance of Baptism. There is, indeed, great probability, that of the 3000 who were that day added to the church, a considerable number were children of various ages, from helpless infancy upwards.

There is one other particular to be noticed in this passage, which is commonly passed over in silence by Antipædobaptist writers, but which nevertheless seems to deserve our attention. It is said that 3000 were baptized in one day after the third hour—verse 15—that is 9 o'clock in the morning. It is well known too that Jerusalem, the scene of this transaction, was by no means plentifully supplied with water. Here then two questions naturally arise on the Baptist hypothesis. How could twelve people baptize so many in so short a time, if they were to use the same ceremony with each individual that is now observed by the Baptist Preachers? And where could a sufficiency of water be found at that dry season of the year—for it was Pentecost—for the purposes of immersion? This is a sore difficulty, and cannot well be got over. Some writers, however, attempt to tell us how all this could be done very well and very easily.* But the attempt involves supppositions and theories which are much more extravagant and improbable than the assumption, that baptism was administered to the 3000 by sprinkling. For this mode of administering the ordinance is the only one which renders the narrative of the historian rational, and accords best with the tenor of his description.

* See Crawley, page 119.

The conclusion, therefore, which a consideration of the baptism on the day of Penticost inclines us to adopt, is twofold. First we are led to believe that infants were among the number of the recipients; and secondly, that the Sacrament was administered by sprinkling.

Proceed we now to other passages where mention is made of adding members to the Church by baptizing. In the eighth chapter of the Acts, 5—12; we find recorded the labours of Philip, who had been appointed Deacon in the Church—*Acts* vi. 5—at Samaria. His ministry was singularly successful, and was the means, under God, of bringing many, "both men and women," unto the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. But as the Sacred Penman, in relating it, does not throw any additional light on the subject of our enquiry, I will not dwell upon it. For the same reason I forbear enlarging on the Baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch by the same minister—*Acts* viii. 35—38, and on the baptism, St. Paul, as related in the ninth chapter of the same Book, verse 17—18.

The performance of the rite in each of these passages is expressed in general terms: and consequently they afford us no particular information, either as to the subjects or mode of it, beyond what may be gathered from the places already illustrated. There is indeed a tough controversy between the Antipædobaptists and those, who stand up for sprinkling or pouring as the *only* Scriptural mode of administering the ordinance, on the subject of the Ethiopian Eunuch's Baptism. The former say that he must have been dipped; the latter say that is impossible, because there was not a sufficiency of water for that purpose. But

as our church considers the mode of administration to be matter of secondary importance, believing that each of the modes contended for was used in its turn, according to convenience or circumstances. I will offer no other remark on the subject in this place, than merely to refer my readers to a passage of Scripture, which they may contemplate at leisure. It is this.—"Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith unto him, He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."—*John* xiii. 8—10. If then the washing of the feet was sufficient in this instance for the spiritual cleansing of the whole person, surely either sprinkling, or pouring of water on the head, must be admitted to be equally efficacious for the same purpose. Immersion is not therefore absolutely necessary.

The same observations apply more or less directly to the baptism of Cornelius and his friends, which we find related in the tenth chapter of the Acts, from verse 42nd to verse 48th. It is unnecessary therefore to dwell upon it.

The next passage which we shall meet with, relative to the ordinance of baptism, is of importance; inasmuch as it illustrates more fully than any which we have hitherto examined, the principle on which children are admitted into the Redeemer's fold. It is in Acts xvi. 14, 15. and relates the baptizing of Lydia and her household.

"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God,

heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, and when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us saying:—If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide *there*. And she constrained us."

Here we have an eminent example of the manner in which the Holy Ghost co-operates with human endeavours in converting the heart to God. Lydia had no doubt listened with great attention, and mental exertion, to the discourse of the Apostles; and thus contributed a share at least of human ability, towards the accomplishment of the work of grace in her heart. But it was the influence of the Divine Spirit that *effectually* produced it: "the Lord opened her heart." This I may observe is a phrase commonly signifying, "the rendering any person willing or inclined to any thing." Her heart was opened not to *believe* but to *attend* to the things which were spoken of Paul: and the result was her conversion and Baptism, together with that of her whole household.

The passages which have hitherto been examined, contain some expression which lead us to understand that the persons who were admitted to the Sacrament of Baptism, were not only capable of making, but had actually made, a profession of faith;—signifying either their wish to become members of the Church, or their assent generally to the doctrines of the Christian religion. But here there is no word or expression that can, by any construction, consistent with the idiom of the Greek language, lead us to believe that any profession of faith was made by the persons composing the household of Lydia. The sacred historian tells us that

they were baptized; but does not inform us upon what ground the Apostle judged it right to administer the ordinance to the recipients in this particular. Hence, on the principle that we are always to follow the natural meaning of the text, in preference to any other, provided the most evident signification is rational and intelligible; we are to infer that these individuals were baptized because of the faith of Lydia. The Apostle was constrained to stay with herself and household, for some time after this event, doubtless for the purpose of instructing them in the principles of the Christian religion. And on this instruction, their faith and principles of action would in future be grounded.

The common argument drawn from this passage, in favour of Infant Baptism, is—that the household of Lydia may have possibly contained infants and children. This reasoning, in as far as probability may be admitted into the decision of the question, is no doubt very good, and very logical. But it wants the sanction of an express declaration. It is not said that there were either children or infants in the household of Lydia: and therefore the reverse may be equally probable.

The argument I would here deduce in favour of the same thing, rests on a different although I think a stronger foundation. It is this:—The Sacred penman here tells us, that several individuals were admitted to Baptism; evidently upon no other plea that can be discovered from the text, than that they belonged to the household of a believer, and thus enjoyed an opportunity which promised them further instruction in the faith. It is clear therefore that one person may be admitted into the Church, by Baptism, on the faith of another, supposing that the recipient has within his

reach the means of further instruction. This is the most evident inference from the natural meaning of the words before us; the principle hence is fully established that one Christian can Scripturally promise for the future instruction of another, and that such promise may be considered as a sufficient qualification, to entitle that other to the benefits of the ordinance.

This principle being established, its application will of course become general. If it is admissible in Scripture, that adult persons may have been received on the profession of another; is it not equally true that infants may be received into the Church on the same conditions? Most undoubtedly. If a servant can be received to baptism on the responsibility of his Master or Mistress, may not a child be received on the promise and profession of the parents? Certainly. The cases on this principle are exactly parallel. And what is true of the one can with equal truth be predicated of the other.

Really the glosses of Antipædobaptist writers on the passage under consideration are not only below mediocrity in point of criticism, but are absolutely illogical. They say that, although no mention is here made of a profession of faith having been made by every individual of the household, yet doubtless it must have been made in the usual manner; else the ordinance could not have been administered. This sort of reasoning is by logicians called *petitio principii*, or *begging the question*; because it takes for granted what ought to be proved. They are here attempting to *prove* the usual manner; and they have evidently no right to propose it till that proof is complete. Besides they have recourse to probabilities and suppositions, which

they affect to despise and deprecate so much in their opponents.

An impartial reader would be naturally led to make a very different inference, from the Apostle's silence on the subject of a previous profession in this instance. He would conclude that, as no mention is made of it, the recipients were incapable of professing, and therefore either children or Infants. On this point however I will not insist, as I have already shown that the principle of responsibility, evidently recognized in this passage, having a general signification, is equally applicable to both adults and infants.

One other observation, and I have done with this passage. Lydia, when she and her household were baptized, besought the Apostles, saying "if ye have judged *me* to be faithful to the Lord come into my house," &c. Now it is generally agreed among commentators that the Greek particle, here rendered "*if*," ought to be translated "*since*"—Since ye have judged *me* to be faithful, &c. She does not say *me and my household*: she was the only person there that was faithful—or at least the only person that was considered faithful. And the Baptism of her household being the consequence of that faith, further confirms the principle which I have endeavoured to illustrate; namely, that one may be baptized, under certain circumstances, upon the responsibility of another.

It is very generally supposed, by the writers who have overlooked this principle, that our Church has authorised the administration of the ordinance, without any profession of faith, on the part of the recipient; imagining that, like the Church of Rome, she lays peculiar stress upon the mere rite—the mere *opus*

operatum, and believes that this is quite sufficient.—Whenever this supposition is reasoned upon, the very circumstance of her ritual being thus made the subject of censure, is always a sufficient proof, in the estimation of all her members, that the censurer has not studied either her principles, her doctrines, or her Liturgy. So far is she from denying the propriety of exacting a profession of faith in the principal articles of the Christian religion, that the Offices for the Baptism of Infants, and for that of adults, are composed upon this very principle. In the former she exacts a profession of their belief from the Sponsors, and in the latter from the recipient himself; thus always retaining inviolate the principle—that this Sacrament be administered in no case without proof of faith on the part of the Candidates. She wisely adopts this course because her ministers are uninspired men, and unable to judge, like the Apostles, of the inward evidence of the heart of the recipient. This subject shall be discussed more at length on a subsequent occasion. At present, let us see how one of the writers above referred to treats the passage of Scripture we have been considering, and others of a similar tendency.

"I conclude," says Mr. Baxter, "that all examples of Baptism in Scripture, do mention only the administration of it to the professors of saving faith; and the precepts give us no other direction. And I provoke Mr. Blake,"—his opponent,—"as far as is seemly for me to do, to name ONE precept or example for baptizing any other, and make it good if he can."

When it is asserted that this challenge is thrown out, after an examination of the case of Lydia and her household, the impartial and unbiassed reader

will see reason either to doubt the sincerity, or to question the penetration, of this stern Champion of Antipædobaptism, as a fair and candid expositor of the word of God.

The next passage of Scripture to be examined, is that where the baptism of the Philippian Jailor and his household, is recorded. It is related in the same chapter from which the preceding case is taken.

Acts. xvi. 29. "Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas.

- - 30. And brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

- - 31. And they said, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

- - 32. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

- - 33. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his straightway.

- - 34. And when he had brought them unto his house, he set meat before them and rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house."

Paul and Silas having, through preaching the Gospel of salvation, incurred the displeasure of the populace and the Magistracy, were cast into prison for teaching customs which it was not lawful for Roman citizens to receive—*verse* 21. But the miraculous interposition of Providence did not permit them to remain long in confinement. An earthquake and other phenomena not only put it in the power of the Apostles to escape, but also was the means of bringing about a salutary change in the spiritual condition of

the keeper and his household. It is extremely probable that this man must have heard the Apostles preaching repentance and remission of sins, and eternal salvation through Christ, before they were cast into prison. For we find that without receiving any particular instruction from them, his first question, on perceiving the miraculous occurrences that had taken place, was "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" As if he had previously been acquainted with their divine mission and its object, and convinced that the hand of God was in it, from what he had seen and heard the night of their confinement. The answer of the Apostle deserves consideration—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

On this passage Dr. Doddridge remarks as follows: "the meaning cannot be, that the eternal salvation of his family could be secured by *his faith*." But if they could not be saved by his faith, we have seen in the case of Lydia's household that they at least might be baptized on his professing for them. And this, no doubt, is the meaning of the Apostles. They evidently use the term *believe* generally, and include under it not only the mere assent of the understanding to certain doctrines and points of faith, but also the duties and obligations which those doctrines imply.—Then it follows that if the Jailor were to use his authority as the head of the family to bring them to Christ, and to exert his energy in inculcating the precepts and promises of the Gospel, he would not only be obeying the exhortation addressed to him, but would also afford that responsibility which might be deemed sufficient for admitting his household to the Sacrament of baptism.

Hence we do not find that each individual of the household offered a profession of his faith in his own person: the word was spoken unto them merely, and we are told that they *believed*, after the ceremony had taken place—*see verse* 34. We may imagine therefore that, at the Jailor's express request to be saved, the Apostles took that opportunity of further instructing him in the ways of salvation, and of also imparting what knowledge they could to his household; that in the course of such instruction, the Apostles pointed out the necessity of entering into the visible Church, by submitting to the ordinance of Baptism; and that immediately afterwards the ordinance was administered indiscriminately to all present. The only *profession* of belief that we read of, is that of the Jailor himself; and if such an act of faith on the part of the rest was absolutely necessary, we are certain that the inspired penman would not have omitted to mention a fact of so much importance. The unprejudiced reader therefore will perceive how little ground the Annabaptists have for continuing, in their communion, that custom which they call "telling experience," or giving an account of the candidate's conversion. A day is commonly appointed for this ceremony amongst them: and the person, who expresses a desire to enter into their association by submitting to baptism by immersion, is requested to speak out before the congregation, and to give a full account of the means and manner in which he had been roused to a just sense of the value of his immortal soul, and to desire salvation through Jesus Christ. In the course of addresses of this nature, there are expressions used, and thoughts entertained, that are any thing but in con-

formity with the pure and peaceful and holy spirit of our religion. Sometimes the audience is edified by an account of a singular dream; occasionally of a particular vision; which seems as much to indicate an excited imagination, as the existence of sincere and lowly contrition.

Mr. Baxter's views on this point are these; "To contemn this is to renounce all rules of order"—he is speaking of profession before baptism—"for where can we expect to find it if not here? I profess my conscience is fully satisfied from this text, that it is one kind of faith, *even saving*—that must go before baptism; and the profession whereof the minister must expect." *Disput. of Right to Sac. p.* 91. The minister alone is the only individual, who, in this Divine's estimation, has a right to call for a profession of faith in any case; he being more capable than any of the congregation to judge of what really constitutes a profession of saving faith.

But to return to the case under consideration. The household of the Jailor having been baptized before any thing is said of their believing, beyond the profession made by the head of the family, and no mention being made of the necessity of such preparation, we are led to conclude that, in this instance also, the principle of admitting sponsors in baptism is recognized. The sacred writer says expressly that *after* the necessary instruction had been given, and the ordinance administered, to every person in the house—"he set meat before them, and rejoiced *believing* in God with all his house." This is the natural inference which every person who narrowly considers the circumstances of the case, will be inclined to make from the simple

account given of it; no other conclusion can be admitted without doing evident injustice to the meaning of the original.

The principle of responsibility being once admitted, it is of little consequence to enquire whether there were children in the household of the Philippian Jailor or not. It is very probable that there were children and young persons in his family; but even upon the supposition that they were all adults, still the fact of their having been admitted to the ordinance on the responsibility of their master,—without having made any express profession of their faith, proves beyond a doubt that infants, without any express profession of their faith, may be admitted too. This is all that is contended for at present: its application will be shewn afterwards.

On the mode of administering the Sacrament in this particular instance it is unnecessary to dwell. All things considered it is extremely probable that pouring or sprinkling was used. The Sacred Penman has pointed out no particular method; and we are left to deduce all our inferences on the subject from the circumstances of time, place, and the emergency of the case. The time was night, the place a Jail, and the emergency sudden. All these combined render it extremely probable, that the mode just referred to was the one resorted to on this occasion. All, therefore, that can be said on the matter rests only on probabilities.

The next case of Baptism recorded in the Acts, occurs in chapter xvm. 4. It is there related of St. Paul's labours at Corinth, that

"He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

5. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

8. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the Synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized."

The best commentary which we can find upon this passage, occurs in 1. Cor. 1. 13: where St. Paul, in his Epistle, refers to the labours he had performed at Corinth, and which we above described.

"Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius: lest any should say that I baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach: not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ be made of none effect."

When St. Paul says that he was "sent to preach, not to baptize," he must be understood to refer to the disputes then prevailing at Corinth, not positively to declare that it was not part of an Apostle's office to baptize. But the Apostles had the office of preaching committed to them, being endued with the highest degree of inspiration, and miraculous powers, and being thus best qualified for converting the world. *Valpy in loc.*

The Apostle thus having, by means of these various gifts of inspiration, convinced the people of his Divine mission, and of the necessity of attending to the concerns of the soul, proceeded to admit them to the Redeemer's fold, by administering the ordinance of Bap-

tism. "Crispus, the Ruler of the Synagogue, and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized."

Here we find the usual order observed. Conviction of the necessity of fleeing from the wrath to come was first produced, and then the christian ordinance administered. But whether the term *believed* implies the faith of each individual respectively, the passage before us will not determine. We have already seen that the word *believe* is a term of general signification, and is occasionally used in different meanings. As no mention is therefore made of a profession having been exacted from them, we are justified in concluding that the inspired penman here means the general idea commonly attached to the verb to *believe;* and that it was signified by the sincere wish of becoming a candidate for the ordinance. And as we find also mention made of the household of Crispus, we may further conclude that the word *believed* refers to the faith of the Father as a sufficient guarentee for the admission of the whole household to the ordinance, and also to the acceptance of the faith of other householders for that of those who were placed under their charge.

The same principle is also clearly illustrated in the record which is left us of the baptism of certain disciples at Ephesus, and which affords us the last instance of the adminstration of the Sacrament in the Acts of the Apostles.

Acts xix. 1. "And it came to pass that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

- - 2. He said unto them, Have ye received

the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

- - 3. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, unto John's baptism.

- - 4. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

- - 5. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

- - 6. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied.

- - 7. And all the men were about twelve."

Here again we find no mention made of a formal account of personal experience having been rendered. The Apostles declared unto these disciples the essential difference between the Baptism of John and that of Christ; and being convinced of the necessity of the latter towards obtaining everlasting salvation, they submitted to the ordinance without delay.

Some commentators are of opinion—*see Valpy in loc*—that the persons mentioned in the passage above quoted, formed among themselves a Christian Church or community at Ephesus; that probably they were some pious Jews, who had lived in that city for the purposes of traffic and commerce; and that thus living remote from the city of Jerusalem, they had not heard of the late effusions and gifts of the Holy Spirit, till Paul now visited them. It is further thought that the congregation may have amounted to a considerable

number; but that the male heads of families connected with it amounted only to twelve: as it is expressly intimated in the seventh verse.

In defence of this view of the passage, it may be urged that the concluding words bear a meaning which is every way favorable towards such explication. For the word used in the original is, ανδρες—a term which always implies an antithesis to the word γυναικες —women. As if the Sacred writer had said—"and all the men"—exclusive of women and children—"were about twelve."

Again, if the Apostle meant to make no distinction between the male and female and youthful part of the congregation, here spoken of, why did he not make use of the term commonly used on such occasions? For instance, he might have used Ψυχαι—*Acts* II. 41. And the same day there were added unto them 3000 *souls*: or he might even have repeated the term in which these believers are first introduced to the notice of the reader, viz. μαθηται, disciples: or finally αυτοπτοι, the Greek word which is generally used to signify an assemblage of males and females. *See Schlensur in voce.* But the Inspired Penman has used none of these terms. He used one of a more confined meaning,—usually applied only to the male part of the community. Hence, by a well known figure in Rhetoric, we conclude that he means to specify not the whole, but a part; and further, by a process of antithetical reasoning, that the Church in question consisted of more than twelve people. This I take to be the legitimate sense of the passage.

Now it may be enquired, if these men were not the only persons who formed the first Ephesian con

gregation, why are they specified at all?—why are they named, and others left unnoticed? Because simply they were heads of families,—persons on whose faith and resolution the rest were admitted to the privileges of Baptism. In other words they were Sponsors, and became, by virtue of their promise to educate those dependent upon them, in the doctrines and principles of the Christian religion, teachers and co-adjutors with the Apostle in his Holy work. For we are expressly told in the 6th verse, that after receiving the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, "they spake with tongues and prophesied"—that is, preached. And to whom could they preach in the first instance but to their own families?—or for whose souls could they feel more anxiety than for those of their nearest and dearest earthly relations and connections?

These considerations lead us forcibly to the conclusion that this portion of Scripture, no less than others previously examined, supposes the existence and the office of Sponsors in Baptism. We find that many have been admitted to that ordinance by the Apostles, without being required personally to render an account of their faith and experience: but that the belief of a parent or friend was deemed a sufficient qualification for its reception. The case of Lydia more especially cannot be well explained without admitting this fact. And all the other passages, in which the baptism of Individuals or multitudes is mentioned, contain nothing that renders it inconsistent with the eternal truths of the Gospel. The doctrine, therefore, —that a profession of faith on the part of the parent or friend, entitles not only the person so professing, but also those under his charge, to the blessings and

privileges of Baptism,—is logically deducible from the word of God, and is of course a doctrine meant to be inculcated by its precepts and examples. As such it ought to be reverently received by all Christian men.

SECTION 5.

GENERAL INFERENCES.

We have now gone over all the passages in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, in which the administration of the ordinance of Baptism is recorded. The descriptions which they contain are expressed in general terms, and are devoid of that detail and minuteness, which would enable a reader at the present day to decide, without hesitation, as to the particulars observed in the manner of its celebration.—This is the chief cause, let it be observed, of all the controversies that have ever arisen on the subject.—For if the sacred penmen had thought it necessary to give us a succinct account of every particular requisite in the preparation of the candidate, and in the mode of performance, all who acknowledge the Divine authority of Scripture would assent to every part of such detail, and would thus be led to practice the same mode of performance. But since the Holy Ghost has withheld this particular information from us, we must submit to be guided in our opinion and practice by such expositions of certain passages,—such constructions of particular words,—such logical deductions by a course of plain reasoning,—in short by all such helps to form a correct judgment in the matter, as the whole range of ancient and modern Philology, con-

sulted in a humble and teachable spirit, can afford us. At the same time we must take care in an especial manner to render all our conclusions conformable to the declarations of Scripture. Such are the proper auxiliaries to the interpretation of the word of God, and to the elucidation of any particular precept or example.

Taking therefore the light of reason for our guide, where the light of revelation does not shine so clearly as to enable us to distinguish with accuracy the various objects which it illuminates, we are led to conclude, from the passages above illustrated,—

I. That the mode of Baptism cannot be proved to have been *exclusively* either immersion or sprinkling; but that both methods seem to have been adopted, either according to the circumstances of the case, or the convenience of the parties concerned.

II. That the principle of vicarious responsibility—that is—of admitting the profession of a believer as a sufficient qualification for those connected with him, is fully recognized.

III. That the ordinance appears to have been administered to individuals of all ages without distinction; and that there is reason to believe that children and infants were baptized by the Apostles.

These are important conclusions, and appear to be as well supported by Scripture as any that can be deduced from its contents in a similar manner. Yet the passages which I have examined, and in which the most indifferent person may find the truths just stated, are the proofs, to which the baptists refer with triumph, as the Charter of their creed and practice, with regard to the Sacrament of Baptism. And not only so, but they disregard every other kind of evidence,—

they are content with the mere evidence of example, and repel that of Scriptural grounds, and particular texts. Now a rational individual would naturally enquire whether, if the only kind of evidence they brought forward was disputable, they could demonstrate the truth of their positions by appealing to any other. An impartial enquirer after knowledge would wish to ascertain, whether other passages of Scripture might not be referred to, and made to illustrate those doubtful ones, and if possible to lead us to definite conclusions. The Scripture is its own best interpreter, and so Christians in general consider it. But to this assertion the Antipædobaptists form an exception; and resolutely deny that, in the instance of the Baptismal Sacrament, we ought to be guided by the light which the Old Testament throws upon the meaning of the New.

It would be incompatible with my present object to state at length the nature of the impression which repeated perusals of many of their works produced on my mind; and which, I have no doubt, can be well understood by every reader, whose opinion happens to be different from their own. They seem to rest satisfied with the disputable evidence of Scriptural example, as the chief foundation of their peculiar mode of administering this Sacrament. In this respect they widely and essentially differ from the Pædobaptists. Instead of deciding the matter by the inflexible assumption of a particular axiom, and maintaining our decision, whether right or wrong, let us apply to the Scriptures themselves for further knowledge; and ascertain whether or not we may arrive at a more satisfactory conclusion, than can be obtained from the passages that have hitherto been considered.

CHAPTER III.

SCRIPTURE EVIDENCE CONTINUED.

SCRIPTURAL GROUNDS FOR INFANT BAPTISM.

SECTION I.

THE LOST CONDITION OF MAN BY NATURE.

THE practice of Antipædobaptist writers, after examining the instances of Baptism recorded in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, commonly consists in a further investigation of the allusions made to it, in the Epistles; and thus it is proposed to decide indisputably the *manner or mode* of administration. But, as our concern is more with the subjects than with the mode of Baptism, we shall take the liberty of pursuing a different course; and endeavour, if possible, to ascertain the sense of Scripture generally, as to whether Infants may be proper recipients of that ordinance. For in all the passages we have yet examined, the evidence amounts only to a strong probability, and cannot of course have the power or authority of an express precept or command. Should we find, on a further consideration of Scripture truths, that the

same conclusions which we have already ascertained to be probable, are supported and elucidated, it appears to me but reasonable that the whole concurrent testimony of inspiration, thus deduced and compared, should be admitted as tantamount to an absolute certainty.

The first general argument that shall be noticed in support of Infant Baptism, will put the matter in a clear light to the minds of many Christians. It is derived from the lost condition of man by nature.

That man is not in a state of salvability by nature, is a position so universally recognized in the Holy Scriptures, that it appears unnecessary to dwell upon it at any length. The sin or transgression of the fall has "*caused the imagination of man's heart to be only evil from his youth*;"[1] or infancy. "*Behold*," says the Psalmist in reference to this subject—"*behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me!*"[2] Immediately after the fall a curse was pronounced on Adam, and on the ground, for his sake. "The ground is cursed for thy sake." "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the ground: for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return."[3] And this curse has passed upon all his posterity, without exception. "*By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.*"[4] "*In Adam all die.*"[5] Consequently we are justified in concluding, from the attribute of divine justice, which exacts punishment for every sin, that the posterity thus offending are subject to punishment. May we have the

1. Gen. VIII. 27. 2. Psalm LI. 5. 3 Gen. III. 17 19. 4. Rom. V. 19. 5. I. Cor. XV. 22.

authority of Scripture for making this conclusion?—"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not behold iniquity."1 "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee."2 And likewise we are told, evil in whatever shape it may appear, shall meet with its due punishment. "God layeth up iniquity for his children:" or as it is in the marginal reading; "God layeth up the punishment of iniquity for his child."3 Again: "Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth it shall die."4 The Apostle, in the epistle to the Romans, notices the same truth: "For the wages of sin is death."5

Now, from these various passages of sacred writ, it is very evident that children are not only conceived and born in sin, but are also subject to punishment on account of that sin. It is not unknown to me that there have been those among other denominations of Christians, besides the Baptists, who have controverted this position: laying much stress upon the mercy and goodness of God, who they take for granted, will not punish an innocent babe for the transgressions of our first parents. But it is unknown to any one how far the mercy of God may be extended in this instance: he has not been pleased to inform us particularly.—We are merely told that every child,—every son and daughter of humanity, are born in sin; that is, having sin inherent in their nature: and that sin of every kind, according to divine justice, is subject to punishment. And from these plain assurances, no one can

1. Habak. i. 13. 2. Ps. v. 4. 3. Job. xxi. 19. 4. Ezek. xviii. 4. 5 Rom. vi. 23.

find it difficult to deduce the natural inference: that an Infant, in consequence of the sentence pronounced after the fall, is subject to punishment, although he may have committed no actual sin. The sentence has gone forth; and cannot now be altered.

It may be admitted, that such a sentence is irreconcileable with Divine mercy, except in one way. No sooner was it pronounced, than a promise was given of a substitute, who, in his own body on the tree, should suffer the punishment due for sin, and thus free penitent sinners from the consequences not only of the transgression of our first parents, but of every actual sin they may have committed in the flesh. This promise includes children; and is in every way applicable to their condition. Now what is the need of calling into question the mercy and goodness of God, in the case of the general sentence passed on mankind, since that mercy and goodness are fully manifested in the redemption of the world through the blood of a crucified Redeemer? Why should man impeach the loving kindness of his maker in particular cases, when it is so clearly displayed in a general manner? Whatever the extent of the original sentence may have been, the extent of the promise annexed to it is the same. But the sentence was general; including men, women, and children: the extent of the promise therefore must embrace these likewise.

There are conditions, however, attached to the promise; conditions, which, if not observed, will be the means of excluding men from its manifold benefits.—These are of various kinds and degrees; always bearing a certain proportion to the talents, and abilities, and opportunities of individuals. In general, they

may be called the duties of the Christian profession. But the only duty, of a religious nature, that can be performed for an infant, is the solemn dedication of him to God by Baptism. And we have reason to believe that this act will ensure the mercy of God, and answer the condition which, in his particular case, was attached to the covenant of the promise. The conviction arising from this source will afford great comfort and consolation to the Christian parent, should it please God to call his child from this world before arriving at the years of discretion. He knows that the blossom which has perished in his arms, has, by baptism, "become an heir of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

The act of Baptism has in an instance of this kind been a means of grace, without the benefit of which the parents could not be certain how far their child had become a partaker of the blessings and advantages of our Saviour's death and passion. This is the view which our Church takes of the matter. "*Forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in Sin: and that our Saviour Christ saith, none can enter into the kingdom of heaven, except he be regenerate and born anew of water, and of the Holy Ghost.*"[1] In other words, that infants although they have been guilty of no actual sin, yet cannot, with certainty to us, enter into the kingdom of heaven after death, unless the conditions annexed to the covenant in their particular case have been fully complied with. The same truth may be made sufficiently clear by a passage of Scripture. It is found in the conference which it pleased God to hold with Abraham on the subject of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah.[1] The Patriarch urged, as

1. Baptismal office.

a plea for saving the devoted cities, that there might be some righteous persons among the inhabitants: "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" This plea is admitted, and a promise given that if even ten righteous persons, or individuals free from sin, were found in all the cities of the plain, they should not be destroyed. But can we think that there were not *ten infants* in four cities?—which history informs us were the number destroyed. Here is a direct proof that infants are not *righteous*, even on the supposition that they have been guilty of no actual sin; and moreover that they are punishable for the original sin of our first parents.

Now, what Father or Mother, having the least degree of concern for the everlasting destiny of their offspring, and professing to receive the Holy Scriptures as the word of God, could incur the risk implied in the above conclusion by withholding the benefits of Baptism? How can they reconcile a delay, or neglect, much less a careless indifference in this matter, with their duty as guardians of youth, or with their conscience as persons looking for salvation through the merits of the great atonement? There is something so unfeeling,—so reckless and inconsistent in the very idea of excluding infants from participation in the rites of this ordinance; and thus rendering their eternal salvation more doubtful than it would have been under other circumstances, that one is almost led to wonder how it could have been cherished, much less put in practice, by any christian parent. A plant may grow, and bud, and blossom in the wilderness: but all the while

1 Gen. xviii.

it is exposed to the rude blast of the desert, and to the hazard of being trampled upon and destroyed by the casual traveller, or of being devoured by the feeding herd. Remove the same plant to the rich soil of a well regulated garden; and it will not only flourish and send forth its leaves and buds and blossoms in greater abundance, but it will be secure from any accident that may arise from the blast, the traveller, or the herd of cattle.

So it is exactly with the child that is admitted a member of the Redeemer's fold. In the dreary wilderness of the world it would of course grow up through the various stages of human existence: still, in the earliest part of its infancy, even whilst it might be totally insensible to every thing that was going on around it, it would be exposed, in consequence of original sin, to the withering blast of the Divine displeasure. As the infant advanced to childhood, and the child to youth and manhood, he would be continually exposed to all those temptations, and unsanctifying influences, which the Great Enemy of man's salvation has contrived for ensnaring the world. None of the graces of the Christian character would sit easy upon him.

But ingraft the same infant into the body of Christ's Church. As soon as the intellectual faculties begin to expand themselves, and are ready to receive the impress of sentiment and of reason, let the name of his Creator and Redeemer become familiar to his mind and ear; let the first accents which he shall be able to lisp forth be those of piety and devotion; and, as soon as circumstances will allow, let the truths of our holy religion be taught in their plain and simple garb; let

all this be done, with a sincere desire of contributing towards the child's eternal welfare, and the natural faculties of the understanding will not only expand, and increase in vigour and strength; but they will also be imbued with a loftier tendency, a holier aspiration, and a more religious character, than could have been induced under the former supposition. That Great Shepherd who has overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil, will watch with tender and affectionate care over every member of his redeemed flock. The influence of the Spirit of grace that has been communicated in baptism, will foster and encourage the growth of every religious principle, and every pious feeling.—And it forms no argument against the existence of this influence, that it is imperceptible to our mental or corporeal faculties. For every believer in the religion of Christ, must be convinced that it is only through the use of the regular and appointed means of grace that any spiritual blessing can be attained: and that the blessing invariably follows, never precedes the use of these means.

It is thus that the good seed, sown in the heart through means of infant baptism, and nurtured by early instruction, brings forth at the last, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.

SECTION 2.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN DISPENSATIONS.

The next Scriptural ground which shall be adduced, as an authority for Infant baptism, is the typical resemblance of the Christian Church, which is mani-

fested by the rites and ceremonies, inculcated under the Jewish dispensation. The Apostle expressly tells us that these religious observances were "*a shadow of things to come*;"[1] or as it is expressed in another place —"*had a shadow of good things to come*;"[2] and were intended, in that chain of events by which the will of God has been made known to mankind, to picture forth the rites and ceremonies of the more glorious dispensation of the Gospel. Indeed, the chief object of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to be to illustrate this particular, and to shew how the religious observances of the Jewish Tabernacle illustrated and explained the nature and tendency of the great Christian Sacrifice. And our Saviour himself has sanctioned by his Divine authority the validity of this illustration.— "Think not," said he, "that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."[3]

From these and passages of a similar meaning, we justly conclude that there is a very close connection between the law and the Gospel, and that the ceremonies of the one throw light upon those of the other. Now, applying this fact to the case under consideration, we shall find an undeniable and convincing argument in favour of Infant Baptism.

1. Col. II. 17. 2. Heb. VIII. 5. 3. Matt. V. 17. 19.

On reading the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, it will be seen, that the rite of circumcision was instituted in token of the covenant which God made with Abraham; and that it was to be administered to every male child among his descendants at eight days old. In this rite was implied that blessing which should result from the covenant, and the observance of its various conditions. And every one who had not submitted to it, was to be "*cut off from his people.*"[1] The same rite was continued under the administration of the Levitical priesthood, and retained in the Jewish nation till the days of Messiah; who, in order "to fulfil all righteousness,"[2] submitted to circumcision "*when he was eight days old.*"[3]

Now this institution in the Jewish Church appears to have had a twofold meaning: first, it denoted the privileges and blessings which were to be conferred on the children of Israel as a nation, in the conquest and possession of the Land of Canaan; these were merely of a temporal nature: secondly, it had reference to the unspeakable advantages which would result from a firm belief in the promise of a future Messiah: these were of a spiritual tendency. But, in either sense, the ordinance in question was initiatory:—implying the extension of certain privileges to the infant, in virtue of his descent from the Father of the Faithful. It was a significant rite by which the infant was incorporated into the community who had obtained such favour in the sight of heaven, and became entitled to all the immunities and privileges which were attached to the promise.

We perceive then that infants, eight days old, were

1. Gen. xvii. 14. 2. Matt. iii. 15. 3. Luke ii. 21.

capable of becoming members of the Jewish Church; or in other words were capable of receiving and enjoying the spiritual blessings of that promise of a Messiah, which animated and consoled the hearts of the faithful under the Jewish Dispensation. And we have seen that this Dispensation was a shadow of good things to come,—a Schoolmaster to bring men to Christ; and that from its close connection with the Gospel dispensation, its rites and observances might be admitted as legitimate illustrations of the Christian ordinances.

If, then, Infants were considered fit subjects for receiving and enjoying the spiritual benefits, which were attached to the Abrahamic Covenant, what can hinder them from being equally entitled to the blessing of the Christian Covenant? We cannot suppose that human nature has so far degenerated since the days of Abraham, as to be thought undeserving now of the same spiritual advantages of which it was then worthy. Why therefore remove from the substance of the Gospel dispensation, the object which was indicated by the shadow of the Mosaic economy?—namely, infant Church membership. Why should we do violence to the evident meaning of Scripture in this particular, and insist upon the validity of principles which would not only sever the Jewish from the Christian dispensation: but even render null and void the obligations of the moral law? We cannot of course, on any grounds of reason or justice, admit the connection I am speaking of in one case, and reject it in another. And to reject it in every case would not only separate the Old from the New Testament, but point them out as distinct revelations,—not from the same blessed source,

—not from the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Sacred penmen, and whose influence breathes throughout the whole,—but from different sources,—from the influence of spirits as different and various, as were the nature and temper and dispositions of the Authors who composed them. This is the rational and inevitable consequence of rejecting the argument derived from the Jewish circumcision in favour of Infant baptism. Those who think differently, may refute the conclusion if they can.

Again: if the Jewish dispensation did thus embrace infants, as well as persons of all ages who happened to become proselytes, we cannot surely conceive that the doors of the Christian Church, of which it was a typical representation, have been narrowed. It is impossible, in conformity with the acknowledged universal aptitude of the Christian religion to the cases of all people "*whether bond or free*," to surmise that its benefits must be withheld from a certain portion of every community, however enlightened or however ready to receive instruction. Surely, surely, the Saviour who descended from the mansions of his glory to seek and to save that which was lost, would never have instituted a decree, which rendered his mission and its blessings unavailable to infancy and childhood; and which, in the case of premature death, rendered their salvation a matter of doubt in the minds of the surviving parents. To suppose that the doors of the Redeemer's fold have been widened, and thrown open not only to the adults of the Gentile nations, but also to their infants—to all, old and young, without any other conditions but those attached to the covenant of grace,—is so congenial to the spirit and tendency of the Gospel

dispensation, and to the benevolent intentions which the Scriptures every where disclose towards the human race, that it will find an echo in every sincere and pious heart. The very essence of the Gospel, is applicability to every circumstance and condition in which human nature can be placed, for the purpose of putting it in the power of all to believe and to be saved. We are justified therefore in making the inference, that, if infants were admitted into the narrower confines of the Jewish Church, which prefigured the Christian, they cannot surely be with propriety excluded from the wider and more extensive boundaries of the latter.

Yet against this most obvious and Scriptural inference, Antipædobaptist writers argue with all the force and resources which they can command. It excites any thing but feelings of admiration in the impartial reader, to observe the anxiety with which they seize upon every little incident, which may seem to favour their great object of separating the connection between the Jewish and the Christian dispensations.—And after all their endeavours to accomplish this, their reasoning appears to be far from conclusive or convincing: because simply it is in direct opposition to the declarations of Scripture, and to matters of historical truth. It would afford me singular gratification, could I be enabled with truth to qualify in any degree this assertion. For it is notorious to every reader of Scripture, that the Jewish Dispensation was displaced by the Christian dispensation: that the faith attributed to Abraham is of the same kind as that required of Christians: that the chief object of both was the same—viz., Salvation through the blood of the atone-

ment; that Abraham looked forward to the days of Messiah through faith, and the Christian looks back to them through the same medium; and that the religious dispositions inculcated in both cases are essentially the same. All these chief points of similarity are acknowledged,—and must be acknowledged, by every believer in the revelation of God. Indeed the Baptist writers whom I have consulted on this head tacitly admit the same acknowledgement. But, say they: the Jewish Church and the Christian Church are not the same. Very true: that we admit, we never intended to shew that they were the same in every particular. All we insist upon is this: that, infants being admitted into Church fellowship under the Jewish dispensation, which was the type or shadow of the dispensation of the Gospel, we have from hence sound and solid grounds for believing, according to Scripture, that they ought also to be admitted into Christian Church membership.

It is unnecessary to pursue this subject further in this place, as I will have occasion to revert to it at a future opportunity. I will therefore conclude this section, with Hume's remark on the controversy concerning the innocence or guilt of Mary, Queen of Scots, as to the death of her husband Lord Darnley.—"Suppose her innocent," says that eloquent historian "and it requires volumes to render other matters of history conformable to that supposition: but suppose her guilty, and every fact and incident recorded of those periods become plain, simple, and naturally flowing from each other." In the same way, suppose that the Jewish dispensation is unconnected with the Christian, and the whole chain of divine revelation becomes obscure and unintelligible, requiring more

than volumes to render the facts recorded in sacred history conformable to that supposition. But suppose the truth,—suppose that the former was given to men to prepare their minds for the reception of the latter, and to shadow forth its most prominent features, and every thing becomes plain and intelligible; fully supporting the conclusion, which I have attempted to illustrate above.

SECTION 3.

THE UNIVERSAL APPLICABILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN ATONEMENT.

The merciful scheme which Providence devised for the redemption of the human race, is no less general in its nature than in its application. Abraham was assured: "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."[1] Isaiah prophesied of the Redeemer's kingdom "that the mountain of the Lord's house should be established in the top of the mountains, and should be exalted above the hills; and that all nations should flow unto it:"[2] and again: that "the earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."[3] And in accordance with these expressions, the New Testament writers assure us that "all flesh should see the salvation of God:"[4] and that "the Lord had commanded the Apostles, saying, I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation to the ends of the earth."[5]—

1. Luke III. 6. 2. Acts XIII. 47. 3. Matt. XXVIII. 19. 4. Gen. XII. 3. 5. Isai. II. 2.

Their resolution likewise of turning towards the Gentiles, sufficiently shews that these first preachers of the Gospel understood their Master's parting command in the same extensive signification: "Go and teach all nations."[1]

The terms by which those to whom the blessings of salvation are sent, are designated, we find from these and other passages of the same kind, to be, "*all the families of the earth*,"—"*all nations*,"—"*all flesh*," —"*the ends of the earth*." These are words of an extensive and general meaning; comprehending, not merely many nations, and kindreds, and various tribes, but also the individual members of whom kingdoms and empires are composed. They refer to the men, women, and children, who form the component parts of every nation, and who must be meant by every description which admits of a general application.

Now is it not reasonable to believe, that if the infantile and youthful part of every nation and kingdom were meant to be fully excluded from the benefits of this salvation, conveyed through the ordinary means of grace, there would have been found in these descriptions some indication,—some notice to that effect? If there be crime, if there be impropriety, in including infants within the congregation of Christ's flock—and the reasoning of all Antipædobaptist writers is intended to shew that there is a great deal of profanity in the practice—if this however were the case, can we suppose that the Holy Spirit would have totally left us in the dark on a subject of such paramount importance? Would we not naturally look for a discriminating use of the terms in which the universal

1. Isai. xi. 9.

applicability of the Gospel is indicated? And would we not expect to find some hint or observation by which we might ascertain our Saviour's design of excluding infants from the ark of his Church?

But such indication or notice is no where even hinted at; not one expression throughout the New Testament which can fairly be construed into a command to withhold the ordinance of Baptism from Infants. It is fully admitted that neither can we find any passage which can be interpreted as a positive and direct command to administer it to them. But, it is contended, and with every regard to just rules of reasoning, that infants are included in the terms "*all nations*," "*all people*," &c.; because every generic term includes every individual of the specific ones which compose it.

Here the preponderance is greatly in favour of infant baptism. Salvation is general in its object; the command of our Saviour is also general; both including men, women, and children, according to the usual meaning of the terms in which they are expressed.—Hence Antipædobaptist writers must shew that such terms are only applicable to the *adults* in any nation or kingdom, before they can evade the force of this argument. But it is impossible for them to effect this, and they therefore attempt to avoid the conclusion to which it evidently tends, by urging that nothing ought to be proved from the silence of Scripture,—that there is no special command for the baptism of infants; and that when we weigh their silence on the subject of a prohibition against that in the matter of command, the balance will be even, and the argument come to nothing.

The train of reasoning here followed by them is

partly true and partly erroneous. It is true in setting off the silence of the Scriptures with regard to a command, against their silence with regard to a prohibition: but it is erroneous in taking it for granted that the general terms we have been noticing do not apply to Infants. And in this respect the Baptists impose not only upon others but upon themselves.

But supposing, merely for the sake of argument, that the absence of a prohibition in the New Testament to baptize infants, cannot be admitted as any proof in its favour, how can we account for the observance of many customs and practices among the Baptists, which appear to be raised upon no firmer foundation? How can they reconcile with the declarations of Scripture, and the observance of the primitive Christians, their favourite custom and principle of close communion? Or from what text of Scripture can they deduce that practice of their's, which consists in a declaration, by any member of the congregation when assembled, testifying, at the conclusion of a sermon, to its truth, and the spiritual endowments of the Preachers? The only answer which can possibly be returned to these queries is—that the practices alluded to are not forbidden in Scripture, and are in themselves considered useful by the members of the Baptist denomination. Such is exactly the argument which may be deduced from the *supposed* silence of Scripture regarding the baptism of Infants. And yet the Antipædobaptists would avail themselves of its inference when it suited their purposes, and with great confidence deny its applicability to the matter which is under consideration. This is a sort of inconsistency, which can be only attributable to that spirit of par-

tizanship which is the natural result of their principles, and which severely tasks the charitable sentiments of those who differ from them. It first promotes self-deception, and next excites a desire to deceive others.

All this reasoning, however, is grounded on the supposition, that the terms—"all nations," "all the families of the earth"—do not include infants; a supposition which can by no means be satisfactorily proved on any canon of just criticism. We perceive, therefore, that the silence of the sacred penman respecting a prohibition to baptize infants, has considerable force even on the practical admission of the Baptists themselves, and that it will be impossible for them to evade that force, without relinquishing many practical observances which distinguish their Church from all other denominations.

Now the inference that I would deduce from the whole is this: the Apostles were brought up and instructed in the Jewish religion, and were therefore perfectly familiar with the practice of admitting infants as parties to the spiritual covenant on which their religion was founded. They received no commands from their Heavenly Master to observe a different rule, under the new dispensation, in the case of infants. We incontrovertibly infer, therefore, that no different rule was observed: more especially since, as we have seen, the universal applicability of the christian atonement leads us to the same conclusion.

SECTION 4.

THE POWER DELEGATED TO THE APOSTLES BY CHRIST.

This is a Scripture ground for infant baptism, which is not commonly noticed by Pædobaptist writers: although in my judgment it can be made to appear a very strong one.

In the tenth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, we find a detailed account of the mission of the twelve Apostles; of the nature and extent of their authority; and of the object for which they were sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They were instructed as to the manner in which they were to exercise their sacred functions: they were comforted against the persecutions and oppositions which they might encounter: and they received a promise that their labours should be accompanied with Divine blessing. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my father which is in heaven." Verse 32. "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." v. 40.

Again, before our Saviour's ascension into heaven, the same commission is renewed and rendered perpetual.

John xx. 21. "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

- - 22. And when he had said this he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

- - 23. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain they are retained."

Matt. xviii. 18. "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

These passages may be considered as the charter of the christian church. In the commission which they contain may be traced that power or authority by which the Apostles assumed the government of the Redeemer's flock after his ascension into heaven; and by which they were enabled to add to its members such as should be saved.

It is unnecessary for me to affirm that I make a distinction between the miraculous powers which were conferred upon the Apostles, and the ordinary operations of the Holy Spirit, that was to have been "poured out on all flesh." The commission entrusted to them was of a personal nature,—incapable of being communicated in its fullest extent to any of their successors: the ordinary operations of the spirit were of a permanent character, and will by the promise of our Lord continue with his Church even unto the end of the world.

The principle therefore is repudiated, on which the Church of Rome has raised her vast superstructure of temporal power and authority, on which she rests her impotent claim to work miracles even at the present day. The principle to be deduced is simply this. The Apostles, in their character as first Preachers of the Gospel, were not only empowered to "teach and Baptize all nations," but to do so in the manner which circumstances or motives of convenience rendered most desirable. The discretionary power with which they were solemnly invested by their heavenly Instructor

does certainly authorise this interpretation, and support the opinion, that the object to be attained invariably occupied a greater share of their attention, than the particular mode by which it was to be accomplished. If men were taught the way of salvation, and obtained remission of their sins through faith in Jesus Christ, it seems to have been a matter of minor consideration with them, whether the ordinary means of grace had been observed, or the desired end brought about in some other manner. Hence we perceive that the sacred historians are less particular in describing the means of grace resorted to on every occasion: because no doubt the Apostles were endued with a power by which they were enabled, if necessary, to dispense with all such observances, and to pronounce at once the pardon of the applicant or believer. The account of the impotent man's cure at the beautiful gate of the Temple, by Peter and John, does not contain the remotest allusion to his having been baptized;[1]—yet he was a believer, and accompanied the Apostles, when they were threatened by the Sadducees and the people.[2] In the same way the particular mode in which baptism was administered to the 3000 on the day of Pentecost, is not clearly specified; although the probability is in favour of sprinkling. Neither is there any mention of the ordinance having been administered at all to the 5000 who believed afterwards. It is merely said that "many of them which heard the word believed: and the number of the men was about five thousand."[3] The same remark is applicable, in a greater or less degree, to every instance of the administration of the ordinance which we have examined.

1. Acts III. 1—11. 2. Acts IV. 14. 3. Acts IV. 4.

Yet we know that the Apostles were commanded to baptize; and we have in consequence strong reasons to believe that they did baptize in every instance of belief and conversion, although the fact be omitted by the sacred penman. From this circumstance taken in connection with the discretionary power, which seems to have been given to the Apostles, one fact I think is extremely apparent:—that the Apostles acted upon their commision in its most extensive signification; that they baptized the parents to signify the remission of sins, and the children and dependants on the faith of their parents and masters.

Hence the practice of the Apostles is undoubtedly the best interpretation which can be given to our Saviour's command. And if we find both the command and the practice to be general, as they certainly are, in their application to christians and their children, we have a strong ground for believing that they are and ought to be equally general still: that the believing parent and his child should still be admitted to participate in the blessings of the Baptismal ordinance.

The discretionary power of the Apostles to act not only in this particular, but in every other instance which related to the government and extension of the church, according to circumstances, or the emergency of the case, may be made apparent from another passage of the Acts.

In the fifteenth chapter of that Book we read of a dissension having taken place concerning circumcision. "Certain men which came down from Judea," to Antioch, "and taught the brethren," who were Gentiles, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of

Moses, ye cannot be saved."[1] Paul and Barnabas were of a different opinion; and the subject of dispute was in consequence referred to a council of the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem, who "came together for to consider of this matter." Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and James, were the principal speakers. After some consultation, the assembly concurred in the opinion that a letter should be sent to the brethren at Antioch, expressive of their views on the subject of discussion. That letter affirmed that circumcision was unnecessary, and that the persons who stated the contrary had no commandment from the Apostles for doing so.[2] And thus the matter appears to have been settled, and the Gentiles were accordingly ever after received into the Church without submitting to the rite of circumcision.

Now, if the Apostolical commission or authority was calculated to sustain the responsibility of so important a decision, we may certainly conclude, without having any recourse to probabilities or conjectures, that it was equal to the settlement of all questions relative to the Baptismal ordinance. Indeed this inference is tacitly admitted by the Baptists themselves; when they so strenuously refer to the example of the Apostles as a sufficient authority on the subject. But they do not conceive it possible that the Apostles could have acted up to the full extent of this discretionary power; because the meaning of the verb *to baptize* is to *immerge*, and for other reasons of equal weight and importance. In this, they decidedly err: inasmuch as they attach more consideration to the less important argument, than is justly its due,—altogether overlook-

1. Acts xv. 1. 2. Act xv. 23 29.

ing the reasons which are generally allowed to have the chief preponderance in the controversy.

I have already shown that the sacred penman has been less particular in recording the modes and accompaniments of the Baptismal rite, than in describing the fact, that the number of believers had been augmented; and that in several instances we find additions made to the Church without the remotest reference to that ordinance; although we have reason to believe that it could not actually have been omitted in any one case. Here then is a complete proof that the Apostles performed, in the actual discharge of their sacred functions, more duties than we find recorded in the Book of the Acts, or it may be in the whole of the New Testament; and we are led to infer that, in doing so, they acted upon the authority which their commission from their heavenly Master conveyed to them.

Of course, those who saw them and conversed with them, would have no doubt as to the method which they sanctioned by their practice, and adopted as a rule in the matter of Baptism. It would have been received as of divine authority, and continued in the Church by their Successors in the ministry. Their words, their actions, their gestures, and mode of proceeding, would all be watched with the utmost attention, and quoted as authority among their disciples and followers in matters of ceremony, and discipline, and ritual observances. And no one who has attentivly studied the subject, can for a moment doubt that the practices and customs of the primitive Christians, in points of faith and discipline, would have resulted from this source rather than from what St. Luke has

written in the Acts of the Apostles. What we search for in various passages of the Sacred Volume, they received and knew from the lips of Inspiration. Hence the importance which all writers attach to the religious observances of the first converts to the Gospel, and hence the weight of the argument deducible from this source in favour of Infant Baptism.

Should any one therefore be disposed to question the applicability of our Saviour's commission in Matt. xxvm. 19—to the case of Infants—and we have shown that there is no ground for doubting that applicability—he may perceive sufficient reason in their general authority,and the mode in which it was exercised, for believing that they baptized Infants. For Infant Baptism, beyond all controversy, was administered by the immediate successors of the Apostles in the ministry, as will be sufficiently proved, when we come to treat of that branch of evidence; and we cannot conceive a more direct method by which they could have learned the doctrine and the practice, than the unwritten instructions of our Lord's followers.—In any case the practice of the Apostles' successors is of much importance in this matter; and when it can be so naturally traced to the instructions of the Apostles themselves, it will be admitted to have a still greater preponderance.

Having thus shown the Apostolical authority, in connection with the practice of the primitive Christians, to be a Scriptural ground for Infant Baptism, I will conclude this section by an enumeration of the arguments contained in the Chapter, of which it forms a part.

1. The first Scriptural ground for Infant Baptism is contained in the certainty that all men are conceived and born in sin, and that no one can enter into the kingdom of heaven, except he be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost: hence the Salvation of children who die unbaptized is doubtful.

2. The Law of Moses was a shadow of good things to come,—in other words, a type or representation of the Gospel dispensation. But the Law of Moses permitted Infant Church membership. Therefore the Christian Church, being the reality or thing signified, will scripturally permit the same thing.

3. The universal applicability of the Christian atonement. Christ died for all: no exception is made in the case of Infants. Infants therefore are eligible to a participation in the benefits of his death and passion. But these benefits cannot be personally applied without baptism. Infants therefore ought to be baptized.

4. The power delegated by Christ to the Apostles was of a discretionary nature. It was exercised in teaching, and authorizing their successors in the ministry, among other things, to baptize Infants. Therefore Infant Baptism has the sanction of Divine authority.

All this kind of evidence the Baptist writers get rid of by stoutly maintaining that the Jewish Church is not the Christian Church, and that the bringing in of a new and a more perfect administration effected a complete change in every thing. But this they can no more prove, on Scriptural grounds, than they can convince a rational man, with all his senses about him, that he is not the same person now that he was 20

years ago; or that the tall tree, which proudly waves its branches in the breeze, has not grown out of the slender slip that was planted some thirty years since. Christianity has followed the Jewish dispensation, as naturally as manhood follows childhood, and a tree grows from a plant. So close is the connection between these different dispensations of God to man.

CHAPTER IV.

SCRIPTURE EVIDENCE CONTINUED.

PARTICULAR TEXTS IN FAVOUR OF INFANT BAPTISM.

SECTION 1.

John III. 5. "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

There are two expressions in this verse which require some explanation, before proceeding to shew the manner in which it bears on the point in hand: the first is "man," and the second "the kingdom of God."

In the original, the term used for the former of these expressions, is εαν τις μη γεννηθη, &c. "Except *one* be born, &c."—being more general in its application than one would be led to imagine, from our English version. Bearing this fact in mind, we shall see sufficient reason for believing that this text is not only applicable to the case of Infants, but, from the nature of their situation, must actually include them in its meaning. For if our Saviour meant that the new birth spoken of in this passage could take place only in the case of adults, he would have certainly employed some expression which might lead us to perceive

the distinction; he would have informed us of some certain sign or mark, by which we might distinguish the line of demarkation between regeneration in Infants, and that in grown-up persons; and, as in other parts of the New Testament, would have referred to the particular individuals whom he might have had in view. But in reading the whole of this chapter, we find no such distinction made. Our Lord's intention appears to have been, to explain to Nicodemus the spiritual nature of the Christian dispensation, and to inculcate the necessity of a new birth of "water and of the Holy Ghost," as a means by which the human race might become partakers of the blessings promised under that dispensation. There is no mention of Infants or adults: and one may surmise, that it would test the skill and dexterity of the nicest criticism, to discover any clue which might lead the reader to make a partial or particular application of our Saviour's words.—They must therefore be taken in a general sense; and in this sense will include infants as well as persons of all ages. "Except *one* be born again," is an expression which applies to the new born babe, with the same propriety with which our Lord applied it to the Hebrew Rabbi.

The other expression to be noticed in this text, is—"the kingdom of God." These words are sometimes used to denote the Church of Christ on earth, as in Luke x. 9, "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you;" Matt. III. 2, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and Matt. x. 7, "And as ye go preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—In these, and several other passages of the same nature, the sacred writers evidently mean the dispensa-

tion of the Gospel,—in other words, the Church of Christ on earth. Sometimes, however, the expression of which we are speaking, means the "kingdom of God," or the Church triumphant in heaven. In this sense it must be understood in Luke xiii. 28, 29, where it is said, that at the day of Judgment, those who should be condemned to depart from the Divine presence as workers of iniquity, should see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, "and all the prophets in the *kingdom of God*, and they themselves thrust out"—and "that many should come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and sit down in the *kingdom of God*." The Apostle, speaking of the resurrection from the dead, attaches the same meaning to this expression, 1. Cor. xv. 20. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;" again, speaking of several sorts of sinners, he says, they shall not "inherit the kingdom of God"—Gal. v. 21. Finally, in this sense of the words, the Disciples seem to have understood our Saviour in Luke xviii. 24, 25, 26. He had said—"how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?"—and "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." And they that heard it said—"who then can be saved?"

The expression "the kingdom of God," is therefore used in Scripture, sometimes to denote the Church of Christ on earth, and sometimes the Church triumphant in heaven. This double meaning is, if we consider a little, extremely appropriate. For the Church on earth is not different in kind from that in heaven, but in degree. The one is the entrance to the other:

the spiritual enjoyments of the one are calculated to give us a foretaste, however imperfect, of those more complete and true pleasures, which the righteous shall enjoy in the presence of God forever. Both are parts of the same building: so that, as under the Law the entrance to the Holy of Holies lay through the courts and body of the Temple, the road of the Christian towards his place of everlasting rest, passes through the courts and body of the Church on earth, and leads to the holy place in heaven.

Let us now enquire in which of these meanings it is used in the text: but in order to this it will be necessary to make a few remarks on the term "born of the Spirit."

This expression appears, in the general opinion of commentators, to be put for the cleansing and sanctifying our natures from the pollution of sin, by the operation of the Holy Spirit of God. It is equivalent to these words of the Apostle—"he that is in Christ, is a new creature"—II. Cor. v. 17.: "we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works"—Eph. II. 10: "And be renewed in the Spirit of your mind"—Eph. IV. 23. Our nature must be changed; changed not in its essential constitution, but in its prevailing tendency and inclination. It must be changed from bad to good, from sinful to holy: it must be consecrated to God, through the influence of his Spirit,—disposed to live to him, to honour, to praise, and to acknowledge him, as the Creator and preserver of all things. Now this thorough change of heart and mind, is commonly represented in other parts of Scripture as necessary to our final and consummate happiness: this change is meant when it is said—"with-

out holiness no man shall see God;" or—"perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—II. Cor. VII. 1.

The being born of the Spirit, then, means that cleansing and purification of our nature from the pollution of sin, and that change of heart and mind, which it is the object of the Christian Church to effect on earth, and which prepares the redeemed soul for its entrance into heaven. In other words, it means all the duties and observances of the Christian life. And, it is said, in the text under consideration, that the new birth by the Spirit, or the effects of Christianity on the heart, must take place before entrance into the "kingdom of God," can be obtained. The expression "the kingdom of God," must therefore mean, in this passage, the inheritance of the faithful in heaven. For it would be absurd to say that the end or object to be accomplished by the institution of the Christian Church, must be brought about before any one can enter into that Church. Were we to interpret the passage so, the Church on earth would be altogether unnecessary.—We are to understand therefore our Saviour as saying to Nicodemus—Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, by having his heart purified, and his mind and affections exalted by the means of grace and hopes of glory, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," in heaven.

We are now ready to perceive the testimony which this text affords us in favour of Infant Baptism.

That the expression "born of water," means the ordinance of Baptism, is conceded by the great majority of commentators, although it has been doubted by a few, who wished to evade the force of this

text: it is therefore unnecessary to waste time in proving it. "Except one be born of water"—that is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,—"he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We have already seen that the salvability of infants, who die unbaptized in a christian country, may be considered doubtful. This passage, according to the view which has been taken of it, directly tends to confirm that doubt, and to prove the importance of the Apostle's well known exclamation: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"—Heb. II. 3.

Upon the direct question of the salvation of infants, who die unbaptized, I would of course hesitate to pronounce any decided opinion beyond what our Liturgy affirms on the subject. It is there asserted that those infants who die after baptism, "before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved." But our church expresses no opinion with regard to the case of those who are called hence *before* participation in the baptismal ordinance; although her anxiety on the subject, arising, one would imagine, from the natural doubt above stated, may be clearly inferred from her having provided an office for baptism in the case of sickness, which may be used in private houses. The mercy of God, independently of the prescribed means of grace, is, as a matter of course, applicable to all, and sufficient for ensuring their salvation: and we have no reason for believing that infants form an exception in the application of this gracious attribute of our heavenly father. But when it is expressly said, that "except one be born of water he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," we ought surely to consider well, and be

prepared to bear the responsibility, if we deliberately deny to infants the spiritual benefits that may result from the "laver of regeneration." For in the words of the Catechism, it is *generally* necessary to salvation.*"

SECTION 2.

Acts II. 39. "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, and even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

The promise here mentioned has been already noticed, and explained in reference to that general promise given to Abraham, by which he was led to understand that in his name "all nations should be blessed."1 It is illustrated by the prophet Joel, in

*On this subject Hooker expresses himself as follows :— "Touching infants which die unbaptized, sith they neither have the Sacrament itself, nor any sense or conceit thereof, the judgment of many hath gone hard against them. But yet seeing grace is not absolutely tied unto sacraments ; and besides such is the lenity of God, that unto things altogether impossible he bindeth no man ; but where we cannot do what is enjoined us, accepteth our will to do instead of the deed itself ; again, forasmuch as there is in their christian parents, and in the church of God, a presumed desire that Sacrament of baptism might be given them ; yea a purpose also that it shall be given ; remorse of equity hath moved divers of the School-divines in these considerations, ingenuously to grant, that God, all merciful to such as are not in themselves able to desire baptism, imputeth the secret desire that others have in their behalf, and accepteth the same as theirs, rather than casteth away their souls for that which no man is able to help." Eccls. Polity, Vol. II. 197.

There were various opinions upon this point at the time of the reformation, for a detailed account of which see *Lawrence' Bampton Lecture*, for 1804, p 62, 69, 262—5.

1. Chap. III. Sec. 4.

these words—"And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your Sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit."—Chapter II. 28. 29. The Apostle evidently made mention of this promise, as an argument to induce his hearers to become converts to the Christian religion; assuring them that "all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord God should call," were encouraged to look to its fulfilment as the means of salvation, through the Gospel which he preached unto them. It had been thought by many of the Jewish converts that salvation was to be confined exclusively to the subjects of their nation, and that the Gentiles, as under the Law, were to be denied admission to the number of the Faithful.—Hence we find them expressing their astonishment, because the Gentiles were included in the promise of salvation:—"And they of the circumcision, which believed, were astonished, as many as came with Peter because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."—Acts x. 45. But the Apostle expressly told them, in the words under consideration, that the promise of obtaining all the privileges and benefits of the Christian covenant was given not only to the Jews and their children, but to all nations and people, among whom divine Providence had proclaimed the terms of eternal salvation through Christ. In this way that other prophecy would be fulfilled, which declared that the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth, even as the waters cover the face of the deep.

Bearing in mind this general view of the Apostle's meaning, let us consider the words—"*to you and to your children*"—in reference to the obligation which the law of Moses imposed on the Children of Israel, to continue its rites and to teach its doctrines to their remotest descendants.

And this will at once lead us to the consideration of the self-preserving power—if I may so express it—which was provided by special enactments in the constitution of the Jewish Church and Polity. In Deut. vi. 6, 7, we read as follows—"And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up."—Hence it was a duty incumbent upon every true Israelite to contribute towards the continuance of the Polity of his Church and nation among the generations who should come after. There is no exception mentioned. All who were born under the jurisdiction of the Hebrew Commonwealth, and had received the mark or sign of the Covenant which God made with Abraham, were enjoined to observe this command, regarding the instruction of their children and grandchildren in the rites and ceremonies of their religion. This observance, conjoined with the rite of circumcision, was a means, under Providence, of preserving their faith to the remotest generations, and of ensuring it a continuance amongst their remotest descendants. The Psalmist too, refers, in a strain of exalted piety, to the obligation here inculcated: "We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the

praises of the Lord, and his strength and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our Fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments."—Ps. LXXVIII. 4—7. No observation of mine could make this obligation plainer: it was well understood by the Jews themselves, and considered by their prophets of paramount importance.

Indeed the cause of the various apostacies which are recorded in the history of the chosen people, is attributed to the neglect of this obligation, and to the indifference, with respect to the ordinances of Jehovah, which want of instruction, and its constant attendant ignorance, had engendered in the hearts of the rising generation. "Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like unto the neck of their Fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God."—I. King's XVII. 14. The same complaint is repeated by Ezekiel and Jeremiah in various forms of expression: but all tending to shew that the different shapes in which, from time to time, apostacy made its appearance, arose chiefly from the negligence or indifference of the fathers respecting the Spiritual edification of their children. And to prevent the too frequent occurrence of such desertion from the worship of the true God, Solomon assured his subjects, that if "they trained up their children in the way they

should go, when they were old, they would not depart from it."

Here then is the self-preserving power which divine providence had established for the continuance of the Jewish Church and the faith of Abraham until the times of Messiah. One of its fundamental enactments was a law obliging all who should be born within the Hebrew jurisdiction, to inculcate on the minds of the rising generation its various forms and ceremonies, and doctrines and events, on which they were founded. Now the Christian dispensation, being the reality of what was shadowed forth by the Jewish ceremonial, will, as a matter of course, possess a similar claim on those, to whom the glad tidings of salvation have been made known. Its self preserving power must arise from similar obligations on the parent to instruct his child in the doctrines and practice of the Christian faith.

Should further evidence be thought requisite to confirm this deduction, reference may be made to our Lord's command to the Apostles to teach all nations, and to the words under consideration. "The promise is to *all* that are afar off, even as many as the Lord should call." The promise thus given seems to lay an obligation on all, to whom it should be made known, to avail themselves of its benefits, and to transmit, in all their purity and simplicity, its various rites and ceremonies to their descendants. At least if they do not give ear themselves, nor allow their children to come unto Christ, they will subject themselves to a charge of ingratitude. "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to

you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."—Acts xiii. 46. St. Peter's assertion proves the same thing:—"And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it was he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead."—Acts x. 42.

From these and such passages we may perceive that the self-preserving power, which Providence has ordained for the transmission of the Gospel, and for the enlargement of the Messiah's kingdom, is an obligation on all parents in a Christian Country, to use the prescribed means for bringing up their Children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It is not a matter of choice with them whether they will or will not permit their children to become partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ. The very fact,—the bare cirumstance, that christianity is preached in the land, lays a direct obligation on all the inhabitants, not only to use the means of grace themselves, but to extend them to their children. The Providence of God has thus put salvation within their reach; and surely they cannot disregard the calls of that Providence, nor neglect its warnings, without manifest guilt. If they believe the Gospel they must believe that it is for a perpetual covenant: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." That children therefore be spiritually nurtured through the appointed means of grace, is a truth, which forms one of the pillars of the constitution of the Christian Church: it is the foundation, on which, in each succeeding generation, the disciples of Christ build, in a great measure, their faith and practice.

It is, moreover, congenial to the dictates of the natural constitution of man, and the general tendency of the human heart. For tell a child that it is perfectly optional with him to be a member of the Redeemer's flock, it is ten to one whether he will ever join it at all.

Here then the declaration of the Apostle, respecting the children's share of the promise, resolves itself into the following question: "Is the Church of Christ a voluntary association?—or is it not? In other words—can men with impunity refuse to listen to the terms of salvation, when it is within their power and their reach to take advantage of the heavenly boon? Most certainly they cannot. The everlasting Gospel stands as an evidence to condemn them, to accuse them of indifference, of neglect, of carelessness, and to pronounce the sentence under which they shall suffer the penalty due to every sin of omission. The Church of Christ is not, therefore, a voluntary association. It is a community formed and bound together in one body, Christ himself being the head, and continued amongst men in obedience to his command, and under the direction of Divine Providence; that Providence who giveth of the waters of life freely without money and without price.

Hence we infer the duty which the Christian religion imposes upon all parents to bring their children to Baptism. The promise is to the child; and he cannot surely be kept back from the initiatory rite of that promise, without an imputation of guilt somewhere: and that no doubt on the heads of those whose carelessness, or negligence, or obstinacy, occasioned the omission of the sacred rite of Baptism.

The argument illustrated in this section is of such force in favour of Infant Baptism, that Baptist writers do not know well how to get over it. But here, as in other cases where their doctrines are of doubtful accordance with the declarations of Scripture, they, instead of removing the obstacle, evade its force. Accordingly they have assumed, as a fundamental axiom of their creed, that the Church of Christ consists of persons who voluntarily form an association or society on their peculiar principles:—*see the Articles of the Baptist Church.* Thus they loose sight, completely, of the sins of omission which I have been illustrating, and seem to think that although the Preacher is commanded to preach Christ crucified, yet the great body of the people are exempted from the duty of hearing.

Such a voluntary system is not only opposed to the express declarations of the Holy Scriptures, but would crumble into dust before the ordeal of practical experiment. Let the whole Christian world, for instance, once adopt this principle as a fundamental tenet of their discipline,—let them act in this particular, not as men born in Christian parts of the world, but as men who listened daily to the calls of salvation, and might with impunity refuse to be instructed, if they saw fit,—let them do all this, and one would not require the gift of prophecy to foretell, that our Holy religion would soon be extinct in the world; that its ordinances would be utterly despised, and its Sacraments trampled under foot. Such, most assuredly—at least so far as I am able to judge of the probable results of things—such would certainly be the consequence of the universal adoption of the very

principle on which the Antipædobaptists rear the superstructure of the social edifice of their Church.

The natural inference from this reasoning is this: if the Baptists have thus erred with regard to a primary principle of Church discipline, in order to render their system consistent, the cause which rendered the adoption of this error necessary, must also be erroneous or opposed to Scripture. The cause in question is the principle of adult baptism in every case: leading to such results it must undoubtedly be the effect of an erroneous supposition regarding the things of God.

SECTION 3.

Mark x. 13, 14. "And they brought young children unto him that he should touch them, and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them, suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

THE transaction recorded in these verses has been noticed by St. Matthew and St. Luke; but in the main particulars with no variation. The former states that the intention of the parents of these children in bringing them to Christ was, that "he should put his hands upon them *and pray*"—Matt. XIX. 13.—and the latter informs us that they were "Infants".—Luke XVIII. 15.

It is very evident, from these passages of Scripture, that the persons who thus brought their children to

the Saviour, were disciples, or those who believed in his divine mission and power to work miracles, and to confer blessings. They had undoubtedly heard of his fame, and conversed with many that experienced the good effects of his sojourn among the sons of men: for he went about doing good. Indeed there is nothing in the sacred narrative that militates against the supposition that they had been admitted to the benefits and privileges of his earthly kingdom, by Baptism, and were among the number of those who were baptized by his disciples at Ænon. Should this supposition be granted, there will appear to be but little difficulty in accounting for their motives in bringing their children to Christ, "that he should touch them." It will at once be sufficiently evident that their wish was to afford an opportunity to their offspring of benefitting their spiritual interests, by those means which they themselves found so effectual in purifying their hearts, and raising their thoughts and aspirations towards heaven.

Be this as it may: it is not intended to proceed on mere supposition; more especially as a surer foundation for argument may be discovered in the passage under consideration.

It was unusual, it appears, for persons to bring their children to Christ after the manner described above: for "his disciples rebuked those that brought them," under the impression, no doubt, that they were acting in accordance with his wishes. But Jesus was much displeased at them, for offering any obstacle to the wishes of those who might come to him; and reproved their interference in terms, which are at once expressive and significant, and which afford

us a singularly clear evidence in favour of Infant Baptism.

To perceive the manner in which they bear reference to this ordinance, it will be necessary for us to ascertain, in the first place, the meaning of the terms "*coming to Christ*," and of—"*for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*"

The former of these modes of phraseology can be best explained, by reference to other passages where it is used. Our Saviour uses it in Matt. xi. 28.—"*Come* unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest:" evidently inviting those who felt the burden of their sins lying heavy upon them, to come to him and receive the benefits and blessings of that salvation which he came to preach in the world. Again the same phrase occurs in John v. 40.—"And ye will not *come* to me that ye might have life:" where it manifestly bears the same meaning. And in Luke xiv. 26. we read "If any man *come* to me, and hate not his father &c. he cannot be my disciple." So likewise in John vii. 37, "If any man thirst let him *come* unto me and drink." In all these passages, and many more which might be produced to the same effect, the verb *come* implies an approach to Christ, with a view to participate in the blessings of human redemption. It is used in a metaphorical meaning, signifying the action and consequence of drawing near to the Redeemer. Like many other terms and modes of expression, that occur in every page of Scripture, it is used in reference to the operations of the human mind, and may be understood to describe the particular action, which it is necessary for the intellectual faculties to undergo, in entering upon the discipleship of the Gospel.

When our Saviour therefore said "Suffer little children to *come* unto me and forbid them not," he meant to make known to his disciples his desire that little children might be permitted to participate in the privileges and blessings of that redemption, which he came to purchase for the whole world; and that it would be an act deserving of rebuke if any person attempted to prevent them from the enjoyment of these blessings and privileges. This is the evident meaning of the term, sanctioned by other passages of holy writ: and they are quite sufficient to convince every rational person of the good will of our Saviour towards those and all such Infants. For "he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."[1]

The other phrase to be explained is—"for of such is the kingdom of God."

I have on a former occasion so fully explained the scriptural meaning which is commonly attached to the words "the kingdom of God," that it will be unnecessary for me at present to enter into detail. They mean sometimes the Church of Christ on earth; sometimes the Church triumphant in heaven. In which of these meanings they may be taken in the passage under consideration, appears to be a matter of indifference: because the Church on earth is only the beginning or commencement of the Church in heaven: so that the one infallibly leads to the other. Let us suppose, however, with a view of attaching to them a precise meaning, that they refer here to the Church militant on earth, or that state in which men look for salvation through Christ.

1. Baptismal Office.

Now, when our Saviour declared that those infants who had been brought to him, were fit to belong to the "kingdom of God," he meant evidently that they might become members of his visible Church on earth. "Of such is the kingdom of God." In other words, the kingdom or Church which he came to establish, was designed for and might include the children upon whom he had then laid his hands. It is implied that they must be suffered to come into a condition to enjoy the blessings and benefits of that kingdom,—they must be suffered to be engaged in the duties which are incumbent upon, and expected from, the subjects of that spiritual community.

Moreover the privilege is not confined to the children here mentioned: the phrase "of such," renders its application general. Our Saviour did not say "of these" is the kingdom of God, but "of such," meaning children of the same age, and under the same circumstances, in any part of the world. The original word bears this extended signification; and no other will answer the particulars of the context.

Our Lord therefore requested his disciples to suffer little children, or Infants, to become partakers of the blessings belonging to the subjects of his kingdom; thus pronouncing them in every way qualified to be admitted as members of his Church.

But to this the Baptists object: "true, these children were brought to Christ, but he did not baptize them." We do not say that he did baptize them: because the Scriptures afford us no authority for such an assertion. But we insist, and the most celebrated commentators agree with us—we insist that in these words our Saviour pronounced Infants to be perfectly

qualified to become members of his Church. Their capability or acknowledged qualification for admission into the congregation of Christ's flock, is all the inference I would wish to make from this text. And I conceive that the sense of Scripture is so clearly in favour of such inference, that no one who is uninfluenced by party feeling, would venture to controvert it.

Here therefore infants are pronounced capable of Church membership. In a text which I have already examined—John iii. 5—it is expressly said "Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This therefore is the established *mode* of coming to him—by the water of Baptism. He has himself prescribed the manner in which people should come to his kingdom; and the words of the command leave us no room to surmise that any other mode would be Scriptural. Compare these two texts therefore: in the one our Lord states and explains the *mode* of admission; in the other he commands children to be admitted. The result will undoubtedly amount to a positive command to baptize Infants. I have seen no argument or gloss on the other side of the question which even pretends to refute this view of the subject. The reason, of course, is obvious. It is impossible to find a refutation of it in the pages of inspiration.

The Antipædobaptist writers, as already noticed, get over the text under consideration, by simply stating that "Christ did not baptize these children."—May I be permitted to offer a remark or two on this assertion?

It is very true our Saviour did not perform the ceremony or ordinance of Baptism over those children. Indeed he baptized none. But are we to infer that they were still unbaptized when they left his presence? Are we to believe that his disciples did not admit them, in the usual way, among their own body? There is nothing in the passage under consideration, or in the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke, that will support us in either of these inferences. Are we to believe then that these infants had been previously baptized, and were among the number of those who swelled the multitude of Christ's disciples, and made it greater than that of John's followers? This inference is not at all improbable, for the following reasons:

1. They were brought to Christ in order to be *touched*, or as St. Matthew expresses it, that "he might lay his hands upon them."

2. In every passage of the New Testament, where the ceremony of the laying on of hands is recorded, baptism appears to have been previously administered.

Hence we have reason to suppose that they had formerly been baptized. And this fully accounts for any objection which the disciples offer to their second approach to the Saviour.

Further, the omission of baptism in this instance is no argument against the principle laid down in the precept. For even supposing that our Saviour had not only favourably received these infants but actually baptized them, we should have merely an example of baptism; we should merely see exemplified by his actions, what we know to be the prescribed mode for entering into his kingdom. But every example implies

a previous command,—implies a principle, which is previously well known and understood. Consequently the meaning of the precept or command, is of *more* authority than the example in which its fulfilment is recorded. Hence, as we have discovered that the texts which are compared above, amount to a positive command for the baptizing of infants, the omission of the historian in recording the act of baptism, is no argument whatever against the principle which this command implies.

Again, the Antipædobaptist writers infer from the text which we have been examining, not that infants may be baptized, but that they may be saved in case of their dying without it. Now, in the whole range of the arguments by which these writers endeavour to maintain their principal tenets, there is not perhaps a weaker specimen than this. Let us just see how it will stand the test of scripture.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians—chap. II. 5—the Apostle informs us, that grace is a means of salvation, "by grace ye are saved;" and in the eighth verse of the same chapter the affirmation is repeated more fully—"For by grace are ye saved through faith."—The meaning is, that the grace of God displayed in the advent and sufferings of his Son in the flesh, and in his willingness to accept of his perfect obedience as an atonement for the sins of mankind, is a means of salvation to all who should believe in the name of Christ.

Now, it is admitted by every one, that Infants are, in their own persons, incapable of exercising an act of faith; and that if they could not be baptized upon the faith of another, they would be incapable of en-

joying the grace which flows through that channel. No passage of Scripture can be pointed out—at least, I never could discover any—by which it may be made to appear that spiritual blessings may be procured otherwise than by following and using the means appointed in Scripture for that purpose.—And at present we are examining passages of Scripture, and intend to abide by the decision to which they lead us.

Consequently it will fall to the share of those, who assert that infants may be saved without baptism, to point out the *manner* in which that is to be done. To say that we may leave them to the mercy of a gracious God is not enough: the same thing may be applied to all heathens and idolaters, and to all persons in a Christian country who are impenitent. But this will not satisfy the diligent enquirer in the present instance. He must have a surer foundation to build upon. And it remains with the Antipædobaptists to point out that foundation,—to shew in what way salvation may be obtained, whilst, at the same time, the usual means of grace are slighted and neglected. Until they can shew this,—and I believe it to be impossible for them to shew it—rational people will be perfectly content with the belief, that "Baptism is a means of grace, and that their children, if they die in infancy, may be saved through grace"—a conclusion which, I trust, will be admitted by every one, who will take the trouble of satisfying himself on the subject from the pages of inspiration.

SECTION 4.

1. Cor. vii. 14. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean: but now are they holy."

With a view to perceive the full force of this passage, we must bear in mind the peculiar condition and opinions of those to whom it was addressed, and the object which the Apostle had in view in using this language.

The Jews, it appears, had, previously to the appearance of the Messiah, travelled beyond the boundaries of their ancient kingdom, for purposes of traffic; and settled in great numbers in almost all the celebrated towns of antiquity. Corinth, a chief city of Greece, attracted their early attention, and received as settlers many who had come from Jerusalem and other parts of Palestine, and who had brought along with them the religion and laws, and peculiar modes of thinking, which had descended to them from their fathers. No sooner was it determined to preach the word of salvation to the Gentile world, than those cities and principal places, which were known to be the residence and resort of many of the Hebrew nation, received the attention and zealous exertions of the first propagators of the Gospel. Among others, Corinth received a visit from St. Paul, whose arguments not only brought over his own countrymen to the faith, but convinced even the heathens, among whom they sojourned, of his divine mission and authority.

Thus, the Church that had been founded in this city by his exertions, consisted partly of Gentiles, and partly

of converts from among his own countrymen. Now it appears that his stay did not afford him sufficient opportunity for explaining fully to the infant Church, every particular which might serve for its rule and guidance in future emergencies. Consequently, after their departure, they were desirous of obtaining further information respecting those customs and ceremonies which respectively distinguish the religion of the Jews, and that of the idolatrous Greeks. It appears that their wish for further spiritual guidance induced them to pen a letter to the apostle—1. Cor. VII. 1.—requesting information, among other things, on the subject of the intermixture of the two nations by marriage.

Now the religion of the Jewish part of the Infant Church, taught them to draw a strong line of demarcation between themselves and the heathen nations around them. "Take heed to thyself lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be a snare in the midst of thee."—Exod. xxxiv. 12. This law appears to have been enforced by divine authority, so long as the Jewish people remained together as a nation. And after their return from the Babylonish captivity, we find their neglect of this injunction recorded as an act of transgression against Jehovah. "For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea the hand of the princes and rulers have been chief in this trespass."—Ezra IX. 2.

It is probable that the Corinthian Jews had trespassed, like their fathers, this divine command, and, on

their conversion to the Christian religion, had been forcibly struck with the impropriety of their conduct. We may infer from the tenor of the Apostle's answer, which is recorded in the chapter from which the words under consideration are selected, that their chief enquiry, conveyed to him by letter, respected the subject of divorce in cases where the husband was a believer, and the wife a heathen, and the reverse. They apparently wished to ascertain whether the law of the Gospel, like the law of Moses, required that the unbelieving partner should be divorced, and thus excluded by a broad line of demarcation from polluting the members of the established Church?—Having been accustomed to live under a dispensation which permitted a married pair to separate, they were naturally led to this enquiry, both because they knew and understood that the Gospel was the fulfilment of the Law, and because the subject involved, not only their their own spiritual interests, but those of their children. The answer of the Apostles is full and satisfactory:—

"If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she is pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." Then follows the reason for which it would be their interest to obey this injunction, and which is expressed in the words under discussion. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband." If it were not so; if the faith of the believing partner were not to be admitted as a ground of sanctification, to the one who continued still in unbelief; then the

children that might be born to a pair thus united would be "unclean." But on the supposition which the Apostle's words seem to imply,—that is, that the belief of the one qualifies the unbelief of the other, then in that case their children would be "holy."

This is a most important testimony in favour of Infant baptism: inasmuch as it fully proves that the faith of the parents considerably influences the spiritual condition of the children; and that it is accepted as a sufficient ground for receiving children into the congregation of Christ's flock, by means of Baptism.

To make this appear, it will be necessary for us to attend to the meaning of the several terms which the Apostle makes use of in the verse under consideration. The sense of the first clause depends altogether upon the signification of the word "sanctified." Let us therefore enquire into the common meaning of this Scriptural appellative.

To be "sanctified," is used in the Old Testament to point out any thing or person that has been consecrated to the service of God. "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it."—Gen. II. 3. "And Moses purified the altar, and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar, and *sanctified* it to make reconciliation upon it." Levit. VIII. 15. Of persons it is said:—"And Moses went down from the mount unto the people and *sanctified* the people: and they washed their clothes." Here, no doubt, reference is made to the preparation that was necessary in order to qualify the children of Israel for appearing in the presence of God at Sinai. They were thus consecrated or set apart for that particular act of devotion. Again:—"Wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was

ended, and until the other priests had *sanctified* themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the Priests." 2 Chron. xxix. 34. Hence, when the Jews spoke of any individual as being *sanctified*, they meant that he was ready,—that he was fully prepared to offer any act of devotion to the Lord his God; they were aware that even under common circumstances, persons might be occasionally disqualified from rendering acts of praise and adoration to Jehovah. Indeed their Law contained a special enactment to this effect. And they knew that they could not be freed from this disqualification, until some acts and ceremonies were attended to, which the Law prescribed as a means of purification.

When the Apostle, therefore, told the Corinthians that the unbelieving husband was sanctified by the believing wife, he meant to say, that through the faith of the converted partner, the other, although in a state of unbelief, was yet qualified for joining in every act of devotion and worship, which the christian religion demanded. The distinctions which were formerly observed in this particular were now abrogated, and an opportunity was vouchsafed to all—be they Jews or heathens, of profiting by the promise of salvation by the Gospel. Thus the Gentiles, as was predicted by the rending in twain of the veil of the Temple, were admitted to the same privileges in regard to the Gospel dispensation, as were enjoyed by the descendants of Abraham, to whom the promise had been made.

Although then the husband were an unbeliever, yet if the wife were among the Christian converts, he was *sanctified* for joining in christian worship, and profiting by christian instruction. And although the wife were

still addicted to idolatry, yet if the husband worshipped in the christian sanctuary she was *sanctified* or qualified by this very fact, for profiting by the glad tidings of salvation.

This is a fundamental truth in the doctrines of the christian faith. The Apostle proves it by supposing the reverse, and drawing a consequence from that supposition which appears to have been contrary to a well known and acknowledged fact. This process of reasoning is called "*Reductio ad absurdum*," a demonstration of the truth by shewing the absurdity of a contrary or an opposite conclusion. The case is therefore as the Apostle says, with regard to the reciprocal influence of the faith of the married pair; for if it be otherwise,—if this reciprocal influence did not affect the condition of the unbelieving party, then the children were unclean. But the fact is they are holy: you know that they are holy and act accordingly; therefore, "the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband."

Let us now attend to the meaning of the terms *unclean* and *holy*, as they are used in the passage before us.

Unclean is a word which is of very frequent occurrence in the Old Testament, and is generally used to denominate those things and persons that for some cause or other, are unfit or unqualified, for the time being, for the service or worship of Jehovah. The following passage is an instance in which it is used in reference to both. "If a soul touch any unclean thing whether it be a carcase of an unclean beast, or the carcase of unclean cattle, or the carcase of unclean creeping things, and if it be hidden from him, he also

shall be unclean and guilty."—Leviticus, v. 2. And we find it brought forward as a charge of profanity against the priests of Judah, that they neglected the ritual distinction in these matters. "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them," Ezek. xxii. 26. This is the meaning which the Corinthian Converts would be led, from their familiarity with the old Testament phraseology, to attach to the Apostle's expression in the place we are considering. They would understand him to mean that, if the one parent were not sanctified, by the belief or faith of the other, the children would be *unclean*,—would be unfit to be offered in covenant to God; and would require to submit to a process of purification in order to be qualified at some future period. Hence then, we are led to infer that the children, not only of heathen parents, but of a married pair, one of whom was an unbeliever, could not be admitted to the benefits of the Christian Covenant without the process of reciprocal sanctification, spoken of by the Apostle. The unbelief of one parent, if not sanctified by the faith of the other, was quite enough to render the offspring unclean, or unfit for admission to the Redeemer's fold.

But the term *holy* is invariably used, when so applied, to mean quite the reverse. It is employed by the sacred writers to denominate that which has been, or may be, offered unto the Lord. "And ye shall be *holy* men unto me."—Exod. xxii. 31. "Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows thou shalt take,

and go unto the place which the Lord shall choose."—Deuter. xii. 26. It is an epithet which is almost invariably applied to the Hebrew nation, to distinguish them from the heathens among whom they sojourned. "Thou art an *holy* people to the Lord."—Deuter. vii. 6. And the prophet Isaiah, having reference to the times of the Gospel, says: "and they shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord."—Isa: lxii. 12. From these and an endless variety of other passages, it is sufficiently clear that the meaning of the word *holy*, when applied to things or individuals, is:—that they have been, or may be, dedicated to the service of God. The Apostle therefore meant to impress upon the minds of his Corinthian converts that their children were in a fit condition to be offered in covenant to God, or had actually been offered at some former opportunity. He even goes further, and assures them, that if either of the parents be a believer, then the children are qualified in like manner.

Now, are we to infer from this passage, that the children of such persons as are spoken of, are holy and sanctified,—free from the pollution of original sin? Are we to infer, that by virtue of their parents' faith they are exempted from the sentence of condemnation passed upon all men? By no means: such an inference would be in direct opposition to the repeated declarations of Scripture, and to a deduction, which is made from those declarations in a former section. Cap. iii. 1.—The epithet, *holy*, therefore, must be understood to designate the condition of children, not in reference to their descent from the common progenitor of the human race, but in reference to their descent from believing parents, or from parents, one

of whom was a believer. In this view of the case, the offspring of Christian parents are pronounced holy,—qualified in virtue of parental faith, to enter into covenant with God. They have an hereditary right to the benefits of the Christian covenant ; and that right cannot of course be withheld, without a manifest violation of the design and spirit of the Gospel. This position has been, I trust, sufficiently demonstrated by what has been advanced on the words under consideration.

Now the sign or seal by which infants who are thus qualified, may be admitted into the covenant, is baptism. If children, therefore, descended from Christian parents are, in virtue of that descent, qualified for admission into the Christian Church, they are most undoubtedly qualified for baptism, which is the door of entrance. Hence, Infant Baptism is a Scriptural ordinance.

It is a sin, therefore, to withhold infants from coming to Christ, when his Apostle here declares that they are qualified to come. It is a sin to keep those out of the church, who are permitted thus to enter it. To keep from the kingdom of God those, who our Saviour expressly tells us may be admitted into it, is decidedly a sin ; inasmuch as it is in opposition to his expressed wish or command. It is a sin of cruelty to those infants who are thus refused an entrance into a state of grace. It is a sin of impiety against God, to refuse and neglect the dedicating to him, those whom he is willing, and has ordered that Christians should dedicate to him, or to refuse to make him the offering which he allows and requires. To hold and teach that this is unlawful, is the sin of adding to the word of

God. It is to forbid what he has not forbidden, and is adding a negative command to the positive commands of Scripture. Well, then, may we exclaim—"He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

From this passage, I think we may further infer, by way of corollary, that infants were actually baptized in the time of the Apostles. St. Paul here informs us that the children of Christian parents were *holy*: and this word, as we have seen, may signify that they are qualified and fit to be dedicated to God, or have actually been dedicated to God in baptism.—The former meaning is the principal foundation for the argument just concluded: the other will lead directly to the belief that they were actually baptized. For if they had actually been dedicated to God, before the Apostle wrote this first Epistle to the Corinthians—and the meaning in question will certainly bear us out in this supposition—then they must certainly have been baptized; because we read of no other mode by which men can be dedicated to God, under the Christian dispensation. Children were therefore baptized in the days of the Apostles.

When we reflect upon this; when we consider that the Apostles conversed with our Lord on the subject, and knew his mind perfectly, regarding all its particulars; when we further consider that there is not, in the whole of their proceedings, as recorded in the acts of the Holy Apostles, one jot or tittle that appears to militate against Infant Baptism; when we again perceive that the whole tenor of the christian dispensation, from the beginning to the end of Scripture, is favourable to the practice; and when we see that there are commands and injunctions and decla-

rations, that do directly prove the propriety of the ordinance, and shew that it was administered to infants in the days of the first preachers of the Gospel:—when we consider all this mass of conclusive evidence, can we hesitate for a moment to pronounce that doctrine dangerous and erroneous, which would thus strike at the very foundation of the Christian Church, and deprive its younger members of their dearest privileges? Surely, surely, nothing but indifference or disregard to the words of Scripture, can be offered as an excuse or palliation: and these, Christian charity and brotherly affection call upon every servant of Christ to expel by every lawful and possible means from the precints of the Redeemer's fold.

SECTION 5.

CONCLUSION OF SCRIPTURE EVIDENCE. RECAPITULATION.

I have hitherto examined what the Scriptures contain on the subject of Infant Baptism: and before leaving the very important evidence which they afford us in its favour, perhaps it may not be out of place briefly to recapitulate what has been said.

First of all, it has been made to appear that the practice of dipping or washing was common among the Jews for religious purposes; and that they looked upon it as a sign or emblem of their purification from sin and uncleanness. Hence the Baptism of John did not excite so much wonder as otherwise it might have done. And the narrative which records it is ex-

pressed in such general terms that we cannot ascertain whether infants were among the number of the baptized or not.

Our Saviour submitted to the ordinance at the hand of John: but he did so to fulfil all righteousness, and to mark the commencement of his ministry: no example therefore can be taken from this instance of it. Our Saviour, after he had entered upon his ministry, baptized by his disciples at Ænon: the narrative here is also of a general character, and gives no particular information regarding the subjects of Baptism; although from the nature of the circumstances, we have reason to suppose that they must have consisted chiefly of grown-up persons. For it was necessary that the first converts to the faith of the Gospel should be actuated by rational conviction.

Our Saviour further gave a general command to the Apostles to make disciples of and baptize all nations. No exception whatever is named: and if he had laid it down as a rule that infant baptism was unscriptural and improper, and consequently sinful, he certainly would have given, in that commission, some intimation to that effect. But no intimation of the kind is even hinted at: therefore as infants make up a large portion of every nation, we must understand our Lord's words as including them no less than grown-up persons.

From the several passages in which baptism by the Apostles is mentioned, it may be inferred generally, that the ordinance was administered according as opportunity and circumstances permitted. There are several instances in which it appears that adults only were partakers: but there are others, where the context

leads us to believe that adults and infants were baptized, and that the faith of the former was considered as constituting a title to the ordinance on the part of the latter. This is more particularly true, regarding the cases of Lydia and her household, and of the Philippian Jailor.

We find no mention made of a formal profession of faith having been rendered previously to the administration of the ordinance; such as is now used in the Anabaptist communion under the name of *experience.* The mere mental act of assent to the faith was all that seems to have been necessary. Repentance thus begun was afterwards accomplished in the appearance of its fruits.

But these are only examples of baptism: and an example implies a precept: therefore the precept is of more importance in an abstract point of view.—The precept for infant Baptism may be inferred from the following fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.

The Gospel is of general application in its design and tendency. Infants are no-where prohibited from enjoying its spiritual blessings: therefore, as descendants from our common progenitor, we must believe them to be included in its gracious promises.

The Jewish church or dispensation was a shadow of good things to come, and represented in a typical manner the nature and character of the Christian Church. Infants were admitted into church membership at the age of eight days, under that dispensation: consequently there is a strong presumption that they may be admitted to the same privileges under the more extensive dispensation of the Gospel.

The condition of man is sinful by nature: the only way to escape from the effects of this sinful and fallen state is by salvation through Christ. But means of grace are appointed by which this salvation must be "worked out." In the case of infants the only means that can be used is baptism. If this is neglected, and if the child die, there is no certainty as to the salvable condition of the departed soul.

The Apostles received authority from our Saviour, by which the government of the Church, and the regulation of its ceremonies, were vested in their persons. They could therefore, by precept and example, authorize the baptizing of infants; on the supposition, which is not at all probable, that the practice of doing this was not common before the ascension of Christ. Reasons will be adduced in the next chapter which will lead to the belief that they, and their immediate successors in the ministry, baptized infants.

Again, there are several texts which, on close enquiry, are found to afford sufficient ground for this ordinance. Our Lord by his Providence has caused the Gospel to be published in a certain country. It is therefore obligatory on the inhabitants of that country to receive it. He has further declared that no one can enter into the Christian Church except they be born of water; and commanded his disciples to suffer little children or infants to come to that kingdom or church. This therefore is a positive command for infant baptism.

The Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, has pronounced the children of believing parents to be holy: they were therefore fit for receiving baptism.

Now, from this course of reasoning it is pre-

sumed that the following particulars may be fairly deduced:

1. There is no passage to be found in Scripture which denies baptism to infants.

2. The commands of our Saviour to baptize are general, and therefore include infants.

3. The practice of the Jewish Church is a strong argument in favour of Infant Baptism.

4. Precept is of more importance than example.

5. The precept for baptizing infants founded on the principal doctrines of the Christian faith, ought therefore to be of great authority in settling the question.

6. Several examples authorize us in concluding that the faith of the parents qualified their offspring for the reception of the ordinance.

7. This justifies and explains the use of god-fathers and god-mothers.

8. Our Saviour declared his good will towards children; and that they were fit to enter into the *kingdom of heaven*, or his Church on earth.

9. The entrance is through the waters of Baptism.

10. It cannot be proved that the Apostles did *not* baptize infants.

11. On the contrary, there is a strong presumption in support of the opinion that they did baptize them.

12. The very appearance of christianity in any country lays an obligation on the inhabitants to benefit by it.

13. "The promise is also to their children," therefore their children ought to be admitted to its privileges by Baptism.

14. Children that are pronounced *holy* in consequence of the faith of their parents, have an hereditary claim to baptism.

15. These conclusions are in perfect accordance with the declarations of Scripture, and with the tendency and nature of the Gospel dispensation.

16. No arguments, grounded upon an equally broad foundation, can be produced against them.

17. The evidence of Sbripture is on the whole in favour of bringing children or infants to Christ in baptism.

18. It is adding therefore to the precepts of Scripture to keep them back.

In this evidence, be it observed, I have only examined Scripture in reference to the subjects of baptism. For regarding the mode of it, our Church has left little or no room for discussion. She admits fully with the Antipædobaptists that immersion was the primitive and apostolical manner of administering the ordinance in general: but she believes further that in certain cases the administration of it may have taken place by pouring or sprinkling. For her opinions and practice in both instances she appeals to Scripture; and in doing so is freed from the difficulties and intricacies into which the adoption of either exclusive dipping or exclusive pouring would inevitably lead her. Taking this broad basis for her guidance, she has acted in conformity with the spirit of the Gospel, and has left no room for discussion on the subject.

CHAPTER V.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE IN FAVOUR OF INFANT BAPTISM.

SECTION 1.

TALMUDICAL ACCOUNT OF THE BAPTISM OF JEWISH PROSELYTES.

THE *Talmud*—a term which literally signifies doctrine—is a body of Jewish laws, containing a digest of doctrines and precepts, relative to religion and morality. It consists of two general parts,—viz, the *Mishna* or text, and the *Gemara* or commentary.—The former is a collection of various traditions of the Jews, and of expositions of Scripture texts; which they pretend were delivered to Moses during his abode on the Mount, and transmitted from him through Aaron, Eleazar, and Joshua, to the prophets; and by them to the men of the Great Sanhedrim, from whom they passed in succession to Simeon—who took our Saviour in his arms,—to Gamaliel, and ultimately to Rabbi Jehudah, surnamed Hakkadosh or the *Holy*. By him this digest of oral law and traditions was completed, towards the close of the second century, after the labour of forty years.

The Gemara contains the commentary upon the Mishna. It is considered by the Jews of the present day to be of very high authority in deciding doubtful questions or difficult cases. In the opinion of Christians, however, its contents are not of so important a character; and is only considered applicable to the illustration of a very prevalent or particular custom.

The Jewish Talmud, therefore, is very useful for illustrating the manners and customs noticed in Scripture, and is commonly admitted in theological criticism, to be of the same authority as a well attested history. For this reason I have placed it at the head of the historical evidence of Baptism, and proceed now to place before the reader such passages of it as refer to this subject, as I find them quoted by Dr. Wall.

The Talmudic author is in the following passage speaking of the admission of Gentile proselytes to the Jewish Church. He says:—when a proselyte is received, he must be circumcised: and when he is cured —that is, of the wound of circumcision—they baptize him in the presence of two wise men, saying; Behold he is an Israelite in all things. Or if it be a woman, the women lead her to the waters, &c."—*Talmud. Babylon: Mass: Jevamoth.* fol. 47.

Again: "They do not baptize a proselyte by night." They were not baptized till the pains of circumcision were healed."—*Talmud. Hieros. Jeva.* fol. 46. & 42."

Again: "If, with a proselyte his sons and his daughters be made proselytes; that which is done by their father redounds to their good." *Tal.* or *Gemar: Babylon: Chethuboth.* c. 1. fol: 11.

Here mention is distinctly made of the baptism of children, and an assurance given that the ordinance should be "for their good." In a subsequent passage the reason is given, or rather, an explanation of the rite mentioned, as applicable to the case of children. "They are wont to baptize such a proselyte in infancy, upon the profession of the house of judgment—that is, the court.—For this is for his good."

"And the *Gloss*," says Dr. Wall, "there having first put in an exception, that if the father of the child be alive and present, the child is baptized at his request: but if not, on the profession of the court—comments thus on those words.—

"They are wont to baptize. Because, says the *Gloss*, none is made a proselyte, without circumcision and baptism. Upon the profession of the house of Judgment, that is, that three men have the care of his baptism, according to the Law of the baptism of proselytes, which requires three men: who do so become to him a Father. And he is by them made a proselyte."—Wall, vol. i. p. lxxx.

From these passages I conceive that we have sufficient evidence to prove that baptism was administered by the Jews to Gentile proselytes and their children; and that *the court of Judgment*, as the Talmud expresses it, corresponds exactly to the office of Sponsors in the christian church. But a question has arisen among learned men, with respect to the period at which this custom began to be observed by the Hebrew nation. Some imagine that the institution of proselyte baptism took place before the coming of John: others—and the majority—think that it had not been commonly received by the priesthood as an

observance applicable to the admission of proselytes until the age of the Apostles; and that it was borrowed from the example of the Christians. Dr. Lightfoot is of the former opinion, who affirms—"that the baptizing of infants was a thing as well known in the Church of the Jews as ever it has been in the Christian Church."—Hor. Heb. Matt. iii. 6. Pædobaptist writers do not however insist upon this as an established fact: because simply it cannot be fully proved from the words of Scripture. Nevertheless they are all ready to admit that such ordinance prevailed in the Jewish Church so early as the first or second century of the christian era; and are further willing to follow the authority of the Talmudic writers in this particular.

Indeed it is very certain, and cannot for a moment be doubted by any who may have given his attention to the subject, that the Jews baptized proselytes, and the children of proselytes, in the days of the Apostles: so the Jewish writers affirm. Maimonides treats distinctly of the admission of proselytes in the manner stated above; and is considered among christian writers to be of very high authority. I might quote, if necessary, more proofs in support of this position; but the fact is so well, and so generally established, that any attempt on my part to advance further evidence might be deemed superfluous. The reader is referred to *Dr. Jennings's Jewish Antiquities, Book* i. *chap.* 3. *pp.* 65, 68.

Now the fact that proselyte baptism was administered to infants, in the Jewish Church, during the time of the Apostles, and the certainty that no commandment to this effect can be discovered in the Old

Testament, have induced learned men to believe that the Jews took the hint of proselyte baptism from the Christians after our Saviour's time.

It was nevertheless erroneous in the Jews even on the principles of their own Law, to borrow proselyte baptism from the practice of the early christians.— Yet the very circumstance of their doing so, proves beyond a doubt that Infant baptism pravailed in the Christian Church in the days of the Apostles. I have already shown, in the preceding chapter, that even on the supposition that our Saviour's command to the Apostles did not refer to the case of infants, the first preachers of the Gospel could, in virtue of their apostolic commission, authorize the practice in question. Here we have strong evidence that Infants were then baptized. It is a moral certainty therefore that they were baptized with the knowledge and concurrence of the Apostles. And whether they were baptized in virtue of our Lord's command, or of the authority which he gave to his Apostles, is a matter of little or no consequence. The source of authority is the same in either case: that is, the will of our blessed Lord and Saviour.

Such is the nature and extent of the evidence which may be gathered from the Jewish Talmud on the subject of Infant baptism.

SECTION 2.

THE EVIDENCE AFFORDED BY THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN WRITERS.

THE evidence which may be deduced from this source in support of Infant Baptism, is of a very strong and conclusive character. Indeed it is impossible for the

most prejudiced reader to peruse with attention, the memorials of the Christian church, which have descended to us from her brightest ornaments, in the days of her greatest purity, and not to be satisfied that the blessings of the New Covenant were extended under her direction to persons of all ages—from the infant in the cradle to the adult of eighty. The expressions which the authors make use of, and the train of reasoning which they invariably pursue, directly lead us to this conclusion. And we feel the more disposed to acquiesce in the truth of the impression which our minds receive from a careful enquiry into the opinions of those early ages on this subject; inasmuch as we find them to be in perfect accordance with the language of Scripture, and with the conclusion which by fair and strictly logical reasoning may be deduced from the doctrines of our holy religion.

The most ancient writer, whose authority may be adduced on the present occasion, is *Clemens Romanus.*

He lived in the times of the Apostles. He was a fellow-labourer with Paul: and his "name is in the book of life." Philipp: iv. 3. After the death of St. Paul, he wrote from Rome, letters to the Christians at Corinth, which although not admitted into the Sacred canon of Scripture are yet of very high authority, as apocryphal memorials. The passage which refers to Infant Baptism is found in Epistle i. cap. ii. 17. He is speaking of Job, and says:—

"That he was just and blameless, true, one that feared God, and avoided evil. Yet he condemns himself and says:—There is none free from pollution: no, not though his life be but the length of one day."

In another passage of the same Epistle, cap. xxxviii. he says:—

"Let us consider, therefore, Brethren, whereof we were made: who and what kind of persons we came into this world: as if it were out of a sepulchre, and from utter darkness. He that made and formed us, brought us into his own world, having prepared for us his benefits before we were born."

Now putting these two passages together, we find that the former distinctly recognizes the doctrine of original sin; and that the latter refers to the blessings conferred on the world by the Gospel of salvation. Hence we discover that Clemens entertained the same views upon these important subjects which our Saviour and his Apostles had inculcated before him. "Except one be born of water and of the spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God." These views, as I have already proved, lead directly to the principle, that infants who are born in sin ought to be admitted, by baptism, to the benefits of redemption, which were prepared for them before they were born.

Hermas Pastor lived about the same time with Clemens. He is saluted by the Apostle among the faithful at Rome.—Rom. xvi. 14—and stands high as an authority in the first age of the Church. He has written several passages to shew the general necessity of water, that is, baptism, to save men. In one place he represents the Church as a Tower built on the waters, and says:—Lib. i. vis. 3. cap. 3.—"Hear, therefore, why the Tower is built on the waters; because your life is saved, and shall be saved by water."

In another place he makes water-baptism so necessary to all, that in a vision he represents the Apostles,

as going after death to baptize the Holy spirits who lived under the Old Testament, that they might be translated into the kingdom of God.—Lib. III. simil. 9. n. 16.

"It was necessary," says he, "for them to ascend by water, that they might be at rest: for they could not otherwise enter into the kingdom of God, than by putting off the mortality of their former life. They therefore, after they were dead, were sealed with the seal of the Son of God, and so entered into the kingdom of God. For before any one receives the name of the Son of God, he is liable to death—but when he receives that seal, he is delivered from death, and is assigned to life. Now that seal is water, into which men descend bound over unto death; but ascend out of it, assigned unto life. For this reason, the seal was also preached to them, and they made use of it, that they might enter into the kingdom of God."

The evident design of this passage is to represent the necessity of baptism, without which none can confidently hope to enter into the kingdom of God. And it cannot be doubted, that he who thought it so necessary even for patriarchs, who died before the coming of Christ, must think it equally necessary, for all those who live under the dispensation of the Gospel, of whatever age they may happen to be.

It has indeed been questioned whether the Baptism here spoken of by Hermas is to be understood in a literal or in a metaphorical sense. Cotelerius,—a man of great erudition, who made a collection of all the authentic records of the primitive Church,—thinks that we ought to understand the passage under consideration in reference to the spiritual effects

of Baptism: that is,—the good things which are conferred by God in that Sacrament: in other words, a title to eternal life, which the Patriarchs after death are supposed to be made partakers of, by believing the word of the Gospel then preached to them. This was that spiritual water in which departed souls were baptized, as the bodies of the living are baptized in common water. Hence, from this analogy between the literal and metaphorical baptism, mentioned by Hermas, we must needs conclude the necessity of water baptism for all those who are in a capacity to receive it: that is for all those who are yet in the body in order to be made partakers of eternal life. Here again we perceive the application of the principle established by our Saviour—"Except one be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

The next ancient writer, whose works bear testimony to Infant baptism, is *Justin Martyr.* He lived within the compass of the second century,—or less than fifty years after the death of St. John; and wrote various treatises, in the form of apologies to the Emperor and Senate of Rome, in reference to the conduct and faith of the Christians. His object in these addresses appears to have been, to create a favourable impression on the minds of the Roman authorities, with regard to the conduct and practices of his brethren in the Gospel; and thus to stay the ruthless hand of persecution, which threatened destruction and unmitigated punishment to all the professors of Christianity. In one of his apologies he takes occasion to say:

"There are among Christians, at this time, many

persons of both sexes, some sixty and some seventy years old, who had been made disciples to Christ from their infancy, and continued virgins or uncorrupted all their lives." *Apol.* II. *p.* 62.

Now, this was written about the year 148, in the middle of the second century: and therefore, those whom he speaks of as baptized sixty or seventy years before in their infancy, must have participated in the ordinance of Baptism, in the first age, whilst some of the Apostles were still living. Can the unprejudiced mind conceive a clearer proof than this—that Infant Baptism prevailed in the times of the Apostles?

In his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, the same writer makes Baptism in the Christian Church parallel to circumcision, under the Jewish dispensation:—Dialog. p. 261. "We also, who by him have had access to God, have not received carnal circumcision, which Enoch and those like him observed. And we have received it by Baptism, by the mercy of God, because we were sinners: and it is allowed to *all* persons to receive it in the same way."

Now, if baptism be answerable to circumcision, as Justin seems to think; if it succeeded in its room, and be necessary to be received as the means to obtain the true circumcision of the spirit: then, as infants were admitted to circumcision, so they were to be admitted to Baptism,—that being the ordinary means of applying the mercy of the Gospel to them, and cleansing them from the guilt of original sin.

In another place—Apol. II. p. 94—this Author urges the words of our Lord, addressed to Nicodemus—"Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,"—to prove in general the

necessity of Baptism. And until it can be fairly proved by the rules of just and impartial criticism, that these words in the original are not applicable to the case of Infants, and do not comprehend children as well as adults, we must naturally infer that the author under consideration meant to include them. More especially are we led to this conclusion, because it is in perfect conformity to other declarations with regard to this subject, that are scattered through every part of his writings.

Next to Justin Martyr, I will place the testimony of the ancient author of a Book called—"*The Recognitions or Travels of St. Peter.*" There seems to be some uncertainty regarding the writer of this work; some ascribing it to Clemens Romanus, whom we have already quoted, others to an individual of the name of *Bardesanes Syrus.* But, however this may be, it is proved that the work itself must have been written about the time that Justin Martyr flourished; that is, about the middle of the second century. For it is not only mentioned, but quoted by Origen, in his Philocalia; a work that has been received as genuine and authentic, in every age of the Church.

This author then, of the "Recognitions, &c." whoever he may have been, speaks of baptism in the very same way as Justin, and quotes the passage in which our Lord addressed Nicodemus, with the same view. For putting an objection by way of question, he says:—

"What does baptism by water contribute towards the worship of God?" Ans.—It is fulfilling that which is the will and pleasure of God. Secondly:—The man that is regenerated by water, and born again

to God, is thereby freed from the weakness of his first nativity, which comes to him by man; and so he is made capable of Salvation which he could not otherwise obtain."—*Recog.* Lib. vi. p. 551. Apud. Coteler.

Here there is not any particular mention made of the Baptism of Infants; but the reasons adduced in its favour are such as will extend to their case. For if baptism be necessary on these two accounts,—first to cut off original sin, which is the infirmity of our first birth; and secondly, to qualify us to enter into the kingdom of God—then it is as necessary for Infants as any other persons: because they are born in original sin, and can hardly enter into the kingdom of God till that sin be cleansed away in the waters of Baptism. Here then is another author within the compass of the two first ages, who bears testimony to the practice of the primitive Church in baptizing Infants.

Not long after the time of Justin Martyr and the Author just noticed, lived *Irenæus*, Bishop of Lyons, who, according to the researches of Dr. Cave,[1] and Mr. Dodwell,[2] was born in the latter end of the first century, about the year 97. He was a disciple of Policarp, who was the disciple of St. John. About the year 176 he wrote his book against heresies, being then about eighty years of age, and died shortly afterwards. These circumstances render his authority, in the matter under discussion, of much importance. Now there are three things relating to baptism which appear very evident from his assertions. 1. That the Church then believed the doctrine of original sin. 2. That the ordinary way of cleansing men from the pol-

1. Cave Hist. Liter. Vol. 1. p. 41. 2. Dissert: in Irenæus.

lutions of this sin, was baptism. 3. That children, as well as others, were then actually baptized to obtain remission of sins, and to apply the redemption of Christ to them.

With regard to the doctrine of original sin: he sometimes calls it—Lib. v. chap. 19—"the sin of our first parents which was done away in Christ, by his loosing the bonds wherein we were held and bound over unto death." Again, he calls it—Lib. v. chap. 16—"The sin by which we offended God in the first Adam, by disobeying his command; but were reconciled to God in the second Adam, by obedience unto death."

Infants, therefore, as well as others, were under the guilt of this sin, and had need of a Redeemer with the rest of mankind, to deliver them from it. Now, the ordinary way of being freed from this original guilt, Irenæus says, "is baptism, which is our regeneration or new birth unto God;" and which he expressly affirms was administered to children as well as to adult persons. For says he:—

"Christ came to save all persons by himself: all I say who by him are regenerated unto God, Infants, and little ones, and children, and youths, and elder persons. Therefore he went through the several ages, being made an infant for infants, that he might sanctify infants; and for little ones he was made a little one, to sanctify them of that age also."—Lib. II. Chap. 39.

It is to be here observed that the early writers of the Christian Church, especially the one under consideration, make use of the verb to *regenerate* for to *baptize*; having in view, not the outward action, but

its effect, the inward renewing of the heart,—the being born again of the Spirit. For this explication, we have the authority of Irenæus himself, who calls Baptism by the name of Regeneration. Justin Martyr, Chrysostom, and Gregory Nyssen, confirm in various passages the truth of this explication.

Hence, therefore, to say in the phraseology of these writers that infants are *regenerated*, is in effect to affirm that they were *baptized*. This is proof which cannot be controverted, and which fully evinces Infant Baptism in the age of Irenæus, that is, in the second century, to have been the common practice of the Church.

About the time that Irenæus wrote his Books against heresies, a Christian Catechist of the name of *Clement*, was employed at Alexandria, in Egypt, in the instruction of certain disciples, who formed a Church at that place. Hence he is commonly called Clemens Alexandrinus. He wrote several works, in which the doctrines of the church are explained, and enforced upon the attention of his auditors. Like Irenæus, he uses indifferently the terms *Baptism* and *regeneration*, to denote the initiatory sacrament of the Christian Church.

He is disputing against some heretics, and says:—Lib. i. chap. 6. Pædagog.

"When we are regenerated"—by which he plainly means here *baptized*—"we then have received the perfection." And a little after—"As soon as Christ was baptized, presently the voice came from heaven, &c." Again, "He is perfected"—or perfectly initiated—"by the washing or baptism, alone, and sanctified by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon him."

And a little after, he concludes thus: "He that is once *regenerated*, as the name of that sacrament is, and enlightened, has his state immediately changed."

Here the words *baptized* and *regenerated* are used promiscuously throughout. The expression of Irenæus—that infants were regenerated in the Church, is thus further confirmed to mean that they were baptized.

But the same author, in another book of the same treatise—Pædagog: Lib. III. cap. 11—has, in the course of his instructions to certain of his hearers, used the following words:—

"And if any one be by trade a fisherman; he will do well to think of the Apostle and the children taken out of the water."

This is a most remarkable passage, and fully explains the idea which the ancients attached to the terms Baptism or regeneration in the case of children. "An Apostle's taking, drawing, or lifting, a child out of the water, cannot refer to any thing," says Dr. Wall, "that I can think of, but the baptizing of it. And *infantem de fonte levare*, is a phrase used by the ancients, denoting the baptizing of it, almost as commonly as the word *baptizing* itself."

Here I conclude the evidence that may be deduced from Ecclesiastical writers, during the two first centuries, on the subject of Infant baptism. Every one of the Authors, whose works we have noticed, bears testimony, either directly or by implication, to the fact that infants were in those early days admitted by baptism into the ark of Christ's Church. The character of their united testimony is so clear and forcible that we cannot fail to be struck with it. Indeed, no one that

is willing to be informed, can withhold from it his full assent regarding the matter under consideration. If no other evidence could be adduced from Scripture than the command of our Saviour to his disciples—"Go and teach all nations, &c."—yet the testimony of the primitive Fathers of the Church, in connection with the Apostolical authority which the command just alluded to implies, would, to every unprejudiced mind, appear to be sufficient ground for the baptism of infants. It is a testimony which neither art nor sophistry can evade. And yet, most of the Antipædobaptist writers take but very slight notice of this mass of evidence; some* of them merely surmising that it is of little value, because it has been *questioned*. In the same way might we attempt to invalidate the most important truths of our faith: for they have all been questioned, but are not therefore the less certain.

SECTION 3.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE CONTINUED.

Let us now proceed in our enquiry, to the writers of the third century of the Christian era; or, as Wall classifies them, those who lived more than one hundred, and less than two hundred years after the age of the Apostles. The first among these, whose opinion deserves notice, is Tertullian; a presbyter of the Church of Carthage, to whom reference has been made in our history of the contro-

* Crawley's Treatise, p. 91.

versy. He was born in the latter end of the second century, and flourished or wrote his work early in the third.

His private opinion regarding the baptism of children was peculiar, and shews the universal practice of the Church to have been of an opposite character. It is contained in a treatise which he wrote upon this very subject, and is expressed as follows:

"For, according to every one's condition and disposition, and also their age, the delaying of baptism is more advantageous, especially in the case of little children. For what need is there that the God-fathers should be brought into danger. Because they may either fail of their promises by death, or they may be deceived by the child's proving of wicked disposition. Our Lord says indeed, "Do not forbid them to come unto me." Let them come therefore when they are grown up; let them come when they learn; when they can be taught whither it is they come: let them be made Christians, when they can know Christ. What need their innocent age make such haste to the forgiveness of sins? Men proceed more cautiously in worldly things: and he that is not trusted with earthly goods, shall he be trusted with Divine? Let them know how to ask salvation, that you may appear to give it to one that asketh."—De Baptismo, cap. 18.

This passage contains a digest of the objections which have been brought forward by Antipædobaptists, in every age of the Church, against the administration of the Baptismal ordinance to Infants. Tertullian is therefore the first Anabaptist writer to be met with in the annals of history. He was the first

to advise the deferring of it until years of maturity; and the first to urge that measure by arguments drawn from the responsibility of the god-fathers and god-mothers, and from the natural condition of children.

Now the evident inference from these considerations is simply this: that infant baptism was the universal practice of the Church in primitive times, and that Tertullian was the first to oppose that practice. For we do not find in any passage of his works that he was arguing, in the quotation under discussion, against a novelty lately introduced, or labouring to check a custom which he believed to be unscriptural. Neither can it be discovered, from any other author, at what time Infant Baptism was introduced into the Church; although Mr. Robinson and others have taken great pains to find satisfactory evidence on this very subject. It certainly remains with the Antipædobaptists not only to render such evidence, but to inform us particularly when, where, and by whom, "that great and monstrous error Infant Baptism," as they are pleased to call it, was first admitted as an ordinance into the Christian Church. And until they do this, they surely cannot blame people, who wish to render a reason for the hope that is in them, for believing that infant baptism existed as a sacrament from the earliest times;—that it was in fact instituted in obedience to the command of our Saviour, and practised by the Apostles; and that Tertullian was the first who opposed it.

I have already—chap. i.—shewn the reason there is to mistrust, to a certain degree, the authority of this Father as a spiritual guide. He appears to have been

of a very excitable temperament; and ready to lay hold on any novelty that might charm his imagination, however contrary or opposite it was to his former opinions, or to the declarations of Scripture. I may here take notice of his very great inconsistency with regard to this subject.

In a former part of his work, he lays it down as a rule—"that none can be saved without baptism."—De Bap. cap. 12. Yet, in the quotation extracted above, he seems to insinuate that the danger of the god-father is greater than that of unbaptized children. Such inconsistency, in point of opinion, could not have been exhibited at the present day without involving its author in serious difficulties, and perhaps exposing him to the severest reprehension.

Tertullian is therefore the first Antipædobaptist writer that we meet with in the annals of the Christian Church. But from what is known of his history and opinions, one can readily perceive, that those who advocate his novel—novel at least in his time—principles, in these modern times, have not much cause to be proud of his authority. This father ultimately embraced the Arian Heresy, and was in consequence excommunicated from the bosom of the Church.

Several Antipædobaptist writers appear to have some difficulty in managing the evidence of Tertullian. They are evidently desirous of proving from it, that the baptism of infants was then only introduced into the Church: and that this father opposed it for that reason. But Tertullian himself does not say so. He argues against the practice as already established. And there is not one word in his treatise by which it

can be indubitably proved, that the administration of the ordinance to Infants was then a novelty. It is far more rational therefore to conclude,—as indeed every person who has maturely considered the subject must necessarily conclude,—that Tertullian's proposition was the novelty, and the baptism of infants the established practice.

It may perhaps be deserving of notice here, that the Baptists, with a view to corroborate the inference which they are pleased to deduce from the evidence of this father, have recourse to the assistance of the Quakers, whose great advocate, Barclay, expresses himself thus on Infant Baptism: "As to the baptism of infants, it is a mere human tradition."—*Apol. pro.* XII. Every one will perceive that these are the opinions of partizans, and will be guided accordingly.—*Crawley's Treat. p.* 91. *Pengilly p.* 56.

The next evidence I shall adduce is from Origen, who flourished in the beginning of the third century. Nothing can be plainer and more forcible than the testimonies which may be alledged from him. In one place he reasons thus:

"Hear David speaking, *I was conceived in iniquity, and in sin did my mother bear me*; shewing that every soul that is born in the flesh is polluted with the filth of sin and iniquity: And that therefore it was said, as we mentioned before, that none is clean from pollution, though his life be but of the length of one day. Besides all this, it may be enquired, what is the reason why the baptism of the Church, which is given for the remission of sins, is by the custom of the Church given to infants also? Whereas, if there were nothing in infants that wanted remission and in-

dulgence, the grace of Baptism might seem needless to them."—Homil. VIII. in Levit. Tom. I. p. 145.

In another place he says:—"Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? Or when did they commit them? Or how can any reason be given for baptizing them, but only according to that sense which we mentioned a little before: none is free from pollution, though his life be but the length of one day upon earth."—Hom. in Luc. XIV. Tom. II. p. 223.

This evidence is so clear and unequivocal, that its force and consequence cannot, by any sophistry, be evaded. Origen bears testimony, not only to the practice of baptizing Infants in his own day, but insinuates that the Church had adopted it from the beginning. Moreover, he produces the very same reason for this, that Clemens Romanus had done before him: viz. the universal prevalence of original sin. Hence we have sufficient ground to infer that the doctrine just referred to, led unavoidably in every age of the Church to the same result,—infant baptism.

The Antipædobaptists are evidently much perplexed by the testimony of this author: they therefore endeavour to invalidate its force by impeaching the authenticity of his works. All that is necessary to be known on this subject, may be found in Wall's treatise, where it is discussed, and where the genuineness of the writings that bear Origen's name is fully established. To this work I beg leave to refer the reader. In answer to Dr. Chapin, and others, who wish to evade the force of Origen's testimony, I would merely observe, that the poor expedient to which they have had recourse, has been practised by Messrs. Wake-

field, Belsham, Dr. Channing, and other Socinian writers, with regard to the Holy Scriptures themselves; and that, if such criticisms as are adduced for this purpose were to be universally admitted as a criterion for determining the authenticity of ancient Authors, there is not a Book in Europe or America, on whose authority reliance might be placed for purposes of information, if it had the misfortune to be written before the invention of printing. The reasoning in both cases is the same. And if the Baptists persist in rejecting the evidence of Origen on the subject of infant baptism, for the same reason that the Socinians reject or weaken the authority of the Bible, I have only to lament their unaccountable infatuation.

In the middle of the third century lived St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. Reference is made in the first chapter of the present treatise, to his opinion on the subject under discussion, and to the decision which the African Council of Bishops gave respecting it. One Fidus, an African Bishop, had sent a query to him upon this case—"Whether infants were to be baptized, if need required, as soon as they were born, or not till the eighth day, according to the rule given in the case of circumcision?"

To this question, St. Cyprian and a Council of sixty-six Bishops, returned this Synodical answer:—

"As to the case of infants, whereas you judge that they ought not to be baptized within two or three days after they are born; and that the rule of circumcision should be observed, so that none should be sanctified before the eighth day after he is born: we were all in our council of a contrary opinion. It was our una-

nimous resolution and judgment, that the mercy and grace of God is to be denied to none after he is born. For if the greatest offenders, and they that have sinned most grievously against God before, have, afterward when they come to believe, forgiveness of their sins; and no person is kept back from baptism and grace: how much less reason there is to prohibit an infant, who being newly born, has no other sin save that being descended from Adam according to the flesh, he had from his birth contracted the contagion of the death anciently threatened? Who comes for that reason more easily to receive forgiveness of sins, because they are not his own, but other men's sins that are forgiven him."—Cypr. Ep. LIX. Ad Fidum, p. 158.

Here we have both the practice of the Church, and the reason upon which it is founded. Fidus, to whom this decision was sent, lived most probably in a distant part of the country; and believing in the necessity of baptism to salvation, he wished to be informed particularly at what time the ordinance ought to be administered,—whether in cases of danger or illness, it might not be administered *before* the eighth day, which appears to have been the usual time according to the rule of circumcision.

The inference which Baptist writers attempt to deduce from this passage is, like most others which they make from the writings and opinions of the Christian Fathers, very illogical and inconclusive. They attempt to infer from it that Infant Baptism had been recently introduced, because Fidus wanted information respecting the day on which it should be administered. But to any one who may be at the trou-

ble to peruse carefully the words of Cyprian on this subject, it will be sufficiently evident that the extent of Fidus's enquiry referred only to any day *before* the eighth day after the child's birth. For the African Bishop well knew that the child might be lawfully baptized on the eighth day, both because it was the day on which circumcision was performed, and because it was the evident practice of the Church to which he belonged. We have a right therefore to call for more evidence from some other source, that Infant Baptism had recently been introduced, before we admit this application of the passage under consideration. For the writers in question here reason in a circle: taking for granted what they mean to prove. They wish to shew that Infant Baptism was at that time an innovation in the Church: and they take it for granted that it was recently introduced. This is what Logicians call *Petitio principii*, and proves nothing.

St. Cyprian, moreover, introduces those words of our Saviour, which were addressed to Nicodemus, and to which I have had occasion so frequently to refer, as an argument for baptizing persons of every age, and applies them in that general and comprehensive manner, in which I endeavoured to explain them in a preceding section. "Except any one"—so Wall translates his words—"be regenerate of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. For that which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit."

This passage of Scripture is invariably brought forward by every christian writer of antiquity as a proof of the necessity of Baptism in general: and is fre-

quently produced where mention is made only of Infant Baptism. According to Wall's observation—"There is not one Christian writer of antiquity of any language but what understands it of Baptism.—And if it be not so understood, it is difficult to give an account how a person is born of water, any more than born of wood."—Vol. I. 92.

The testimony of St. Cyprian, which is so conclusive, completes the evidence that can be gathered from the writers of the third century on Infant Baptism. The general character of this evidence may be given in a few words. It is more explicit than what may be found in earlier writers, for two reasons.—First: because the introduction of erroneous opinions on the subject, brought on a discussion, in the course of which the sentiments of the orthodox party were clearly expressed. Secondly: because the gradual spread of Christianity brought many into the Church, who wished to obtain particular information with regard to this subject. The former reason applies to the case of Tertullian; the latter to that of Fidus. Let us now proceed to consider the evidence that may be adduced from a few of the writers of the fourth century.

SECTION 4.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE CONTINUED.

About the middle of the fourth century there flourished an African Bishop named *Optatus Milevitanus*, who had occasion to write several Books against the schism of the Donatists. Part of the controversy re-

ferred to the subject of Baptism, and debated the questions:—whether Baptism administered by a minister that was a careless liver, were valid or not?—and whether all other Christians formed so corrupt a Church, that all baptized by them, infants and adults, must be baptized by such men as the Donatists were? In other respects the doctrine and practice of both parties, in reference to the Baptismal ordinance, were the same.

Optatus, after comparing the Believer's assumption of the Christian profession to the putting on of a garment, and calling Christ so put on "a garment swimming in the water,"—proceeds to say:

"But lest any one should say I speak irreverently, in calling Christ a garment, let him read what the Apostle says: '*As many of you as have been baptized in the name of Christ, have put on Christ.*' Oh, what a garment is this, that is always one, and never renewed; that decently fits all ages and all shapes.—It is neither too big for *infants*, nor too little for men, and without any alteration fits women."—Lib. v. De Scism. Donatist. prope finem.

Here, under the metaphor of a garment, this writer illustrates the universality of the Gospel dispensation, and distinctly mentions *infants*, as in every way fit to be clothed with it. This assertion, coupled with the known fact that Baptism was the visible means of assuming the profession of christianity, leaves no doubt on the mind of the unprejudiced reader with regard to the African Bishop's opinion on the subject of Infant Baptism.

The next testimony which I shall produce is from Gregory Nazianzen. He flourished about the middle

of the fourth century, and was considered in his own age a bright ornament of the Church, both for learning, piety, and eloquence. His character has always been highly esteemed in every age of the Church, for his orthodoxy and great zeal in promoting the doctrines of the Gospel. His writings are numerous; comprising essays and orations, with an immense collection of sacred poetry. Among other things, he wrote a treatise expressly on the Sacrament of Baptism, from which a great deal of authentic, and therefore valuable information may be gathered, concerning the practice of the Church in his days, in reference to this subject.

Not far from the beginning of this treatise he expresses himself to the following effect:

"Hast thou an infant? Let not indifference take away an opportunity from thee: let him be sanctified from his infancy; let him be consecrated from his cradle to the Spirit. But why art thou afraid of giving him the sign on account of the imbecility of nature? As if thou wert a faint-hearted mother, void of faith. Hannah, before Samuel was born, devoted him to God, and as soon as he was born, consecrated him, and brought him up from the first in a priestly garment, not fearing for human infirmities, but trusting in God."—Oratio 40. Tom. i. p. 648.

This address is so clear and so direct that it requires no comment, further than to state, that the phrase "sanctified" is used by this writer to denote the administration of baptism: consequently, "sanctified" *from his infancy,* means *baptized in his infancy.*

The above contains the sum of what he advises believing parents to do with their infant children.

But he appears, in the course of his oration, to have had several classes of individuals in view: that is to say, believers, catechumens, and unbelievers. To denote these different classes of hearers, and to point out the permanent and universal nature of the sacrament, he makes use of a very beautiful and appropriate simile.

"Thus reason with thyself. Let there be two coins, the one of gold, the other of iron: and let the head of the Emperor be engraved on both. Then let an impression be made by each upon wax. In what, pray, does the impression of the one differ from that of the other? In nothing. Examine the impression on the wax, even although thou be of singular indifference. Tell from which of the two coins, the golden or the iron, it has been made, and in what manner one and the same mark exists in both instances. The difference is in the matter, not in the impression. So likewise let all those, who enjoy the blessing of baptism, be esteemed fit subjects by thee. Although one may excel another in uprightness of life, yet the power of baptism is the same in all cases."—Orat. XL. p. 656. Tom. I.

Then he goes on to instruct those whom he designates by the iron coin,—that is, those who had been but slightly acquainted with the doctrines and precepts of the Christian religion. For their edification he specifies certain rules and observances, which, for propriety's sake, they ought to bear in mind. But from the tenor of his discourse it can readily be inferred that these *rules* are not founded on the general practice of the Church, but merely deemed necessary in the private udgment of Gregory himself, for the par-

ticular case of the individuals he is addressing—the iron proselytes, if I may so express myself. He says to them:

"What will you say concerning those who are yet children, and neither know the loss nor are sensible of the grace of baptism? Shall we also baptize them? Yes: by all means, if danger urges. For it is better that they should be sanctified without a sense of it, than that they should depart without the seal and the initiation. And of this thing circumcision is a good reason to us, which was wont to be performed on the eighth day, and was administered to those who were void of the use of their reason. As also the anointing of the door-posts, which preserved the first born by things that have no sense. As for others, I give *my opinion* that they should stay three years or thereabouts, when they are capable to hear and answer the holy words: and though they do not perfectly understand them, yet they are thus imbued and formed: and that you then *sanctify* them in soul and body with the great sacrament of Initiation. For though they are not liable to give account of their life before their reason be come to maturity—they having this advantage by their age, that they are not forced to account for the faults they have committed in ignorance—yet by reason of those sudden and unexpected assaults of danger, which cannot by any means be prevented, it is by all means advisable that they be secured by the laver of baptism."—Orat. XL. Tom. I. 658.

Here, in the case of those individuals who had not attained the same degree of holiness and purity of life as others who were in full communion with the

Church, Gregory on his own private authority, proposes a delay of "three years or thereabouts;" before children should be baptized. This advice appears to have been suggested by circumstances, and to have been of partial application. The usual method was decidedly to administer that sacrament to them so soon after their birth as possible, and not by any means to delay it beyond the eighth day.

I have been thus particular in pointing out the object which the Bishop of Nazianzum had in view in this part of his oration; because Wall, so far as I have been able to discover, does not mark the distinction, and because most of the baptist writers, whom I have consulted, have evidently misunderstood the passage under consideration. The latter appear to have imagined that Gregory was speaking of the general practice of the Church, when he advised baptism to be delayed for three years. The fact is, however, that the advice is dictated by peculiar circumstances, and founded upon private opinion. It can therefore form no rule whatever for the general guidance of the Church; nor does it constitute an example that may be followed in modern times.

But supposing it did—supposing it was a general practice in the days of Gregory to defer the Baptism of infants until they were three years of age; what then? Are we hence justified in withholding it till they are twenty or thirty?

The distinction that was made by Gregory between the regular members of the Church, and those who were new converts and lately admitted, is well marked by Mr. Dorrington, whose work on baptism appeared before that of Wall. He says: "if we consider the

place, we shall see that it is reasonable to understand him—Gregory—as saying this of those infants, whose parents themselves were but new converts to christianity, and who were, perhaps, upon the fancy of delaying their own baptism: for it is evident that the general design and scope of the oration is directed against such."—*Dor. Bap. p.* 258.

The testimony of Gregory Nazianzen is therefore strong and conclusive, in favour of Infant Baptism.

In the same century with Gregory Nazianzen flourished Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. In his works, likewise, we can readily discover evidence in support of infant baptism. In his Epistle to Demetrias, a virgin, being that numbered eighty fourth, he casually alludes to the subject. The object, which he appears to have had in view by writing this letter, was to recommend *humility.* After discussing several considerations connected with that virtue, he proceeds to argue against the Pelagian opinion, which asserted the original purity of human nature, and which thus became a fertile source of pride and self-esteem to the thoughtless and vain. In the course of his argument he says:—"Hence it is said that Adam's sin hurts not any of his posterity by communication, but only by example: and hence is the evacuation or inefficiency of the baptism of infants; while such are said only to have the favour of adoption by it, but not the remission of any guilt."—*Epist.* 84.

Here Ambrose condemns the doctrine of the Pelagians, which rendered the baptism of infants unnecessary or useless: because it denied the existence of original sin, from which it was the tendency of bap-

tism to free them. After descanting at considerable length on the danger and unscriptural nature of this tenet, and on the absolute necessity of the ordinance of baptism to salvation, he refers for authority to the words of our Lord, addressed to Nicodemus: "Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—John III. 5. On these words he comments in the following manner:

"Our Lord here excepts no person; no, not an infant, that is not prevented coming forward by some inevitable necessity. The mystery of regeneration does not come to pass without water. The Catechumen believes in the cross of Christ, with which also he is signed: but unless he be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, he cannot receive remission of his sins, nor derive the gift of the Divine grace."—*Lib. de Scis. qui Mysteriis initiantur, cap.* 4.

Copious quotations of the same character and tendency, and of an equally conclusive nature, might be given out of Basil, Chrysostom, Paulinus, Austin, and Jerome; all of whom flourished within the course of the fourth century; and likewise from the records of the Councils of Carthage and Eliberis. But it is to be hoped that the unbiassed reader will find in what has been already extracted from the ancient memorials of the Church, evidence sufficient to satisfy him, that infant baptism has not originated in any new doctrine or practice that may have been introduced in the second or third century: but must consequently have been transmitted down through the first age of our era, from more ancient principles,—even the precept and example of our Lord's Apostles.

For further information regarding the evidence of history on the subject of infant baptism, reference may be made to the work of Dr. Wall, where the whole is quoted and arranged, and suitable observations made upon each passage. This author is sadly traduced by modern Antipædobaptist writers, who do not hesitate to extract from his book sentences and half-sentences, condemnatory of the main object he had in view in composing it. Justice demands that such treatment should be called unfair dealing: because a sentence or half-sentence is too limited a space to contain any one's opinion in an extensive controversy; and because an author cannot be supposed to condemn his own principles.

I will now conclude this part of the evidence by a brief recapitulation of the principal points which it establishes.

Before doing so, however, it may not perhaps be considered out of place to observe, that infant baptism, from the fourth century, continued the unquestionable practice of the Church—the universal Church—for six centuries, and that even then its authority was called into question by only a few fanatics in the south of France. It is still recognized as the Scriptural mode of administering the initiatory Sacrament in a Christian country, by every sect and denomination of Christendom except the Antipædobaptists. Are we then to believe that the great majority of the Christian world are wrong—are labouring under a cloud of spiritual darkness,—and that one denomination of people, who are distinguished by nothing so much as by self-delusion in this respect, are the only persons whose tenets and practice are in accordance with the declarations of Scripture?

But to return: the historical evidence in support of infant baptism may be included in the following enumeration of particulars.

1. The principle of original sin, on which the necessity of baptism in general is founded, is acknowledged in the writings of the earliest Christians.

2. From their mentioning this principle in connection with infants, we have reason to suppose that infant baptism was prevalent in the times of the Apostles.

3. No express mention is made of the baptism of infants in the first century, because it was a custom that universally prevailed among Christians, and therefore needed no explanation or enforcement.

4. In all the ancient writers there is not one passage,—one jot or tittle,—from which it can be proved that infant baptism was an innovation on any other form. Hence we conclude that it existed from the beginning.

5. The writers of the second century afford us a greater variety of information on the subject: because the Church was then extending rapidly, and the heathens needed instruction with regard to its Sacraments.

6. They expressly mention persons who had been baptized whilst infants, in the time of the Apostles.

7. The third century was rife in doctrinal errors. Therefore infant baptism is more fully and explicitly illustrated.

8. Infant baptism was never challenged as unscriptural until the eleventh century: for Tertullian did not challenge it as an error. He only recommended delay.

9. Supposing that our Saviour had not actually instituted infant baptism; still, this historical evidence, in connection with the general commission which he gave to his Apostles, is conclusive on the subject.

10. Whether it has proceeded from the example of Christ, or from that of his Apostles, who acted by his authority, is of no consequence: the source is the same, even the will of God.

11. This evidence is therefore sufficient to satisfy every unbiassed and unprejudiced mind, that Infant Baptism is an apostolical and primitive ordinance of the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BAPTISMAL OFFICES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

SECTION 1.

THE THREE FIRST RUBRICS OF THE OFFICE FOR THE PUBLIC BAPTISM OF INFANTS.

From the foregoing enquiry into the Scripural and Historical evidence of infant baptism, we find that the general tenor and tendency of the doctrines of the Christian faith bear testimony to the reasonableness and propriety of this ordinance; that the example of the Apostles and first Christians proves, by rational inference, the existence of it in the Church from the earliest times; and that in all the words and actions of our Saviour and his followers, there is not the remotest hint that may be construed into a prohibition of it,—a prohibition which would certainly have been laid down, if, as the Anabaptists affirm, there were any harm or impropriety in its administration in the case of infants. Let us now proceed to examine in what manner the Church of England has embodied these points in her offices for baptism: observing the scrupulous care and anxiety which the compilers of

the Liturgy manifested to build on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets; and shewing the scriptural grounds for every doctrine and rite, which are there advanced and recommended for observance.

First of all, then, we shall notice the three Rubrics, or Directions, which are placed at the beginning of the office for the public baptism of infants. The first regards the time at which the ordinance should be administered; the second concerns God-fathers and God-mothers; and the third describes the place of administration. Of each of these particulars we shall treat in order.

1. The Rubric in King Edward the Sixth's Prayer Book, tells us that, in primitive times, there were only two seasons in the year at which the Sacrament of baptism should be administered to infants and children: these were Easter and Whitsunday. At the former Festival the ordinance was to be administered because it is a figure of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Rom. vi. 4.—"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; and like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." At the latter season it was administered in remembrance of the three thousand souls, who were baptized by the Apostles at the Festival of Pentecost, being the same time of the year. Acts ii. 41.—"And the same day there were added unto them three thousand souls." These regulations rendered it necessary that those children, whose birth took place after Easter, were kept back from the ordinance till Whitsunday; and that those who were born after Whitsunday, should remain un-

baptized till Easter in the following year. Exceptions were allowed, however, in cases of danger. The inconvenience arising from these rules soon became apparent: so that it was thought requisite for the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom that baptism should be administered to infants, as at first, at all times of the year. Therefore the Rubric of which we are speaking, ordains—that "the people be admonished, that it is most convenient that baptism should not be administered but upon Sundays and other holy days, when the most number of people come together; as well for that the congregation there present may testify the receiving of them that be newly baptized into the number of Christ's Church; as also because, in the baptism of infants, every man present may be put in remembrance of his own profession made to God in his baptism. For which cause also it is expedient that baptism be ministered in the vulgar tongue. Nevertheless if necessity so require, children may be baptized on any other day."

So necessary does our Church consider the ordinance of baptism towards Salvation, that the first rubric in the office for "The ministration of private baptism" is altogether founded upon it. It is there enjoined that "the Curates of every Parish shall often admonish the people that they defer not the baptism of their children longer than the first or second Sunday next after their birth, or other holiday falling between, unless upon a great and reasonable cause, to be approved by the Curate."

Upon the necessity of admistering the ordinance with the earliest possible convenience, Hooker has these appropriate remarks: "They draw very near

unto error, who fixing wholly their minds on the known necessity of faith, imagine that nothing but faith is necessary for the attainment of all grace. Yet it is a branch of belief that the Sacraments are in their place no less requisite than belief itself." . . . . "Had Christ only declared his will, to have all men baptized, and not acquainted us with any cause, why baptism is necessary, our ignorance in the reason of that he enjoineth, might perhaps have hindered somewhat the forwardness of our obedience thereunto: whereas now, being taught that baptism is necessary to take away sin, how have we the fear of God in our hearts, if care of delivering men's souls from sin do not move us to use all means for their baptism?"—Hooker's Eccles. Polity, vol. II. p. 195.

A little after the place from which this passage is extracted, the same judicious writer observes: "God, who did not afflict that innocent whose circumcision Moses had over long deferred—Exod. IV. 24—took revenge upon Moses himself for the injury which was done through so great neglect; giving us thereby to understand, that they whom God's own mercy saveth without us, are, on our parts notwithstanding, and as much as in us lieth, even destroyed, when under insufficient pretences we defraud them of such ordinary outward helps as we should exhibit. We have for baptism no day set, as the Jews had for circumcision; neither have we by the law of God, but only by the Church's discretion, a place thereunto appointed. Baptism, therefore, even in the meaning of the law of Christ, belongeth unto infants, capable thereof, from the very instant of their birth. Which if they have not howsoever, rather than loose it by being

put off, because the time, the place, or some such like circumstance doth not solemnly enough concur, the Church, as much as in her lieth wilfully casteth away their souls."—Idem. p. 199.

If we go further back than the time of Hooker, who lived in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, we shall find the same sentiments respecting the absolute necessity of baptizing infants, so strong and so decided, that they gave rise to various civil enactments on the subject. During the Heptarchy in England, when, as is proved by Mr. Soames in his Bampton Lecture for 1830, the Anglo-Saxon Church was an independent establishment, unconnected with any foreign communion whatsoever, several Ecclesiastical laws were made for the better guidance of the people, in cases where a discretionary power was left to its spiritual governors. Among these, the most celebrated are the Laws of King Jonè, who began to reign over the West-Saxons in the year 688. He held a council, Sir Henry Spelman informs us,* in which these laws were made in the year 693; and which enacted as follows, with regard to the baptism of infants:

"Let a child be baptized within thirty nights: if it be otherwise, let the father make satisfaction with thirty shillings. If it then die without baptism, let him make satisfaction with all that he hath."

About two centuries and a half posterior to this period, the Northumbrian Clergy assembled in synod under their earthly Sovereign, the Danish king Anlaf, made the following regulation regarding the baptism of infants:

"Let every child be baptized in good time within

*Sax. Chron. vol. 1, p. 182.

nine nights under the penalty of six ore—£6. And if the child die an heathen within nine nights, let satisfaction be made with respect unto God, without any worldly mulct: if it happen to die after nine nights, let satisfaction be made in respect to God, and let twelve ore—£12—be paid for the contumacy, because he was a heathen so long."

The Canons, of which the above forms a part, were enacted Mr. Johnson thinks* about the year 950, shortly before Edred succeeded in consolidating the whole of England under one government, and was in consequence the first who obtained the title of King of Great Britain.† They, as well as those referred to above, prove beyond a doubt the nature of the sentiments which were entertained in those times on the necessity of infant baptism, and lead directly to the inference that there was no period, even since the days of the Apostles, when the opinions of christians in general were of a different description. The Eclesiastical Canons, that were enacted both before and after those I have just quoted, bear witness to the existence of the same opinion: as every one may satisfy himself by reference to any work on the Ecclesiastical history of England. Abundant proof may be found in Collier's elaborate work.

Hence we perceive the admirable uniformity which the Church of England has always observed in regard to this particular. She is consistent throughout; in perfect accordance with the doctrines of Scripture, with apostolical usage, and with the uniform sentiments of the Christian world from the time of our

*See Canon vol. 1, under date.

† Salmon Chron. p. 6.

Saviour. Upon this broad foundation, therefore, she builds her Rubric, that certain days be observed for the baptizing of infants in public; and that no delay be permitted in administering the ordinance, because in all cases it is generally necessary to salvation.

2. We come now to make a few observations on the second Rubric, which refers to God-fathers and God-mothers.

This Rubric was added in our present prayer Book at the last review: and like the preceding is founded on Scripture and the practice of the primitive Church. For in Isaiah chap. VIII. 2, we read of "witnesses" being present at the naming of his son, whom many suppose to be the same with the sureties required by this rubric. Indeed, no one, that has taken pains to inform himself concerning the manner of introducing proselytes into the Jewish Church, can for a moment entertain a doubt, as to the necessity of sureties or sponsors in such cases. During the period which intervened between the Babylonish captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus—a period of more than 500 years—witnesses appear to have been requisite towards the admission of the Gentiles to the privileges of the Hebrew religion.

It has already been shown that the principle on which this rubric is founded, is recognized in various instances in the New Testament. Lydia's household was baptized on her own profession: that is to say, because she was a believer, she was received as a surety for those that were with her, who appear to have made no profession of their own. Acts XVI. 15. The same principle is acknowledged in the case of the Philippian Jailor. He is the only one of his

household that seems to have made a profession of faith—in other words, to have exhibited proofs of a believing heart; and yet they were all baptized. It is true indeed that after the ceremony was performed, himself and all his house believed. But this was the effect, not the cause, of the Baptismal Sacrament: and it cannot be proved that the influence of the Holy Spirit miraculously conveyed in that Sacrament, may not have thus manifested itself. At all events, the most superficial reader can readily infer from the context—Acts xvi. 25, 34—that the Jailor's faith was a condition,—and the only condition necessary for the admission of himself and his household into the Church by baptism, and that in this manner he may be said to have stood as their sponsor or surety. These instances lead us to believe that the principle in question was not only acted upon by the apostles, but was fully understood by their converts: because no doubt it was rendered familiar to their minds by the practice of the Jewish Church.

"In the primitive Church," Wheatly informs us—"god-fathers and god-mothers were so early, that it is not easy to fix the time of their beginning. Some of the most ancient fathers make mention of them, and through all the successive ages afterwards we find the use of them continued, without any scruple or interruption, till the Anabaptists and other puritans of late years, raised some idle clamours against them." . . . . . "It may be observed in general that since the laws of all nations—because infants cannot speak for themselves—have allowed them guardians to contract for them in secular matters; which contracts, if they be fair and beneficial, the infants must make good when

they come of age; it cannot, one would think, be unreasonable for the Church to allow them spiritual guardians to promise those things in their name, without which they cannot obtain salvation."

Hence, therefore, we are authorized to conclude that the principle of appointing sureties for the infant to be baptized, is acknowledged by Scripture; has been practised by the primitive Christians; and has the sanction of analogy by reasoning from secular matters.

The determination of the number of Sponsors required, belongs to that class of subjects in Church discipline, which, according to the immemorial usage of all religious societies, have been entrusted for a definite decision to the judgment of its members. Time, place, circumstances of various descriptions—more particularly the spirit of the age or public mind, and the nature of social intercourse; all enter more or less into the arguments and reasons which determine the decisions and regulations for guiding the Church to a scriptural course of discipline. For it cannot be doubted that a Church which has for its chief object the glory of God and the good of immortal souls, has power and authority to make such arrangements with regard to discipline and other matters of secondary importance, as will best conduce to forward their main design. In the words of Hooker—Eccles. Pol. B. iv. sec. 2,—"But seeing those rites and orders may be at one time more, which at another are less available to this purpose,"—that is, the glory of God,—"what reason is there in these things to urge the state of our only age as a pattern for all to follow? It is not, I am sure, the Apostle's meaning that we should

now assemble our people to serve God in close and secret meetings; or that common brooks and rivers should be used for places of baptism; or that the custom of Church feasting should be renewed; or that all kind of standing provision for the ministry should be taken away, and their estate made again dependent upon the voluntary devotion of men. In these things we easily perceive how unfit that were for the present, which was for the first age convenient enough."

On this kind of reasoning, different denominations of Christians have established the principle of regulating the internal discipline of their several communities according to circumstances; always providing that they adopted nothing contrary to the declarations of Scripture. In this way, the methodists, for instance, have allowed themselves the liberty to use a prayer book in their Church service, or to dispense with it. The Baptists, on the same principle, have their yearly associations and their appointed delegates. And the Church of England, on similar grounds, has published her Liturgy, and enjoined all her rubrics. This therefore is her authority for determining the number of sponsors or sureties that are requisite in the baptizing of an Infant.

As a particular reason for stating the number of god-fathers and god-mothers at three, in every case of infant baptism, it may be mentioned, that shortly after the reformation, when the present rubrics in the prayer book were composed, it was the anxious wish of the reformers to guard against a relapse into popery. To effect their desire, they conceived that the continuance of the practice which had already been

established, of appointing spiritual guardians, would be, under divine grace, of much advantage. The parents are already engaged under such strict bonds, both by nature and religion, to take care of their children's education, that the Church cannot lay them under greater. Still she wisely makes provision, that if, notwithstanding these obligations, the parents should be negligent; or if it should please God to take them to himself before their children be grown up, there yet may be others on whom the duty of instruction and religious nurture shall devolve.

3. The third and last of the rubrics under consideration refers to the place where baptism is to be administered.

In the ancient Churches there were conveniences of different kinds provided, for the purpose of enabling the ministers who officiated in them to perform the various duties of their sacred calling. In particular, care was taken that there should be a Baptistry,—or a small room dedicated solely to the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism. Here a *font* was placed, which consisted most commonly of a large stone, hollowed out; so that it might contain water enough to submerge the person of a full grown individual. At the time of administration the font was filled with pure water, and the minister, with appropriate solemnity and prayers for the Divine blessing, immersed the recipient into it; or, for any thing we find to the contrary, sprinkled him merely with the water. This latter mode, however, was the exception, not the general rule; and it was to be practised only in cases of necessity.

Afterwards the font was placed in the porch or

entrance of the Church; signifying that the sacrament of baptism was the entrance to the Church of Christ, or as it is often called—"the kingdom of heaven." But I cannot find, from any ancient author, that the font was placed in the body of the Church.

The English ritualists, one and all, concur in the opinion that the office for the public baptism of infants should be used no where except in the Church: because it is composed no less for the edification of the congregation, than for the administration of that Sacrament; and because, in cases of emergency or necessity, the Church has provided another beautiful and appropriate office for baptizing infants in private. It may be observed, however, in passing, that this latter office provides only for the administration of the more essential parts of the sacrament, and defers the performance of the other solemnities till the child can be brought to church.

As to the public office, therefore, it is by no means to be used in any place but the church. It is ordered to be said "at the font" in the middle of the morning or evening Prayer, and supposes all along a congregation to be present."—See *Wheatly* in loc.

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The office commences by a question from which it may be ascertained whether the child had already been baptized. The wisdom of inserting this precautionary question will be sufficiently manifest, if we consider that a second administration would be absurd,

and unreasonable; inasmuch as it would argue the invalidity of the first. On this subject the judicious Hooker remarks:—"Iteration of baptism, once given, hath been always thought a manifest contempt of that ancient apostolical aphorism—'one Lord, one faith, one baptism:' baptism not only one, inasmuch as it hath every where the same substance, and offereth unto all men the same grace; but one also, for that it ought not to be received by any man above once."

The exhortation, which follows this precautionary query, contains, like other particular exhortations in the prayer book, a general outline of the scriptural reasons, on which the duty to be performed is grounded. The present one is extremely appropriate, both on account of its brevity and perspicuity.

"Dearly beloved, forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin, and that our Saviour Christ saith none can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerate and born anew of water and of the Holy Ghost; I beseech you to call upon God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that of his bounteous mercy he will grant to this child, that thing which by nature he cannot have, that he may be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's Church, and be made a lively member of the same."

The points of doctrine here asserted are founded upon, and clearly proved from, the following passages of Scripture:

"Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."—Ps. LI. 5.

"We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfiling the desires of the flesh, and

of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others."—Ephes. II. 3.

"Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—John III. 5.

"By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many.' —1 Cor. XII. 13, 14.

"Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death?"—Rom. VI. 3.

There is a close and connected chain of argument in the Apostle's discourse between the quotation just made and the eleventh verse of the same chapter;—which, together with the twelfth and thirteenth, is as follows:

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

The collects which immediately follow the exhortation are no less scriptural and appropriate. In the first, reference is made to the saving of "Noah and his family in the Ark from perishing by water;" to the safe passage of the children of Israel through the red sea; and to the baptism of our blessed Lord in the river Jordan. It concludes by praying that the child—"being stedfast in faith, joyful through hope,

and rooted in charity, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally he may come to the land of everlasting life."

The subjects here touched upon are to be found in these passages of Scripture:

"The long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."—I. Peter III. 20, 21.

"Moreover brethren I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our Fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."—I. Cor. X. 1, 2.

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan, unto John to be baptized of him."—Matt. III. 13.

The concluding part is compiled from such texts as these:

"Your adversary the Devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he way devour. Whom resist, *stedfast in the faith.*"—I. Pet. V. 8, 9.

"And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity; these three: but the greatest of these is *Charity.*"—I. Cor. XIII. 13.

"When they had preached the Gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Listra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much *tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*"—Acts XIV. 21, 22.

"Now they desire a better country that is an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."—Heb. xi. 16.

The second collect naturally resolves itself into four parts. The first acknowledges God to be the aid of all that need; the second directs our prayer to him for the infant that is to be baptized; the third prays that the child may be received according to the Divine promise; and the fourth, that he may enjoy the everlasting benediction of the heavenly washing.

These different petitions are founded on the following passages of Scripture:

1. "Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth."—Ps. cxxiv. 8.

"They that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee.—Ps' ix. 10."

2. "According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."—Tit. iii. 5.

3. "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Matt. vii. 7, 8.

4. "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.—And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. iii. 27, 28, 29.

After the collect just illustrated comes a passage of Scripture which declares our Saviour's good will towards children in general; and which has been discussed at length in a former section. "And they brought young children unto him that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked them that brought them. But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them: suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them."

These words are certainly calculated to afford the greatest encouragement to those who present their children for baptism. They contain the assurance that bringing children to Christ, is an act which is pleasing to him. The order, too, in which they are placed is arranged with great judgment, and with evident reference to the effect of devotional exercises on the susceptible heart of the believer. The service is introduced by an exhortation describing briefly its nature and tendency; then follow prayers for various blessings; and afterwards come the words of our blessed Redeemer, giving us a hope that the blessings prayed for, are within our reach, and that they will not be withheld from such as ask for them in the spirit of truth and sincerity.

The second exhortation, which comes after the passage just noticed, and which is nothing more than a rational commentary upon it, is grounded on this view of the subject. It instructs the god-fathers and god-mothers not to doubt, but earnestly believe that our

Saviour Christ "will likewise favourably receive this present infant, that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy, that he will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of his everlasting kingdom." And it concludes with an invitation to all present, to join in an act of thanksgiving unto Almighty God for the various blessings which are promised under this Sacrament. These blessings are well described by the Psalmist.

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his Saints; and to be had in reverence by all them that are about him." . . . . "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk O Lord in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."—Ps. LXXXIX. 14—16.

The Thanksgiving is divided into three parts:

1. "Almighty and everlasting God, heavenly Father, we give thee humble thanks that thou hast vouchsafed to call us to the knowledge of thy grace, and faith in thee." This is the act of thanks, properly so called.

2. "Increase this knowledge, and confirm this faith in us evermore." These words contain a petition for growth in grace, and include all present.

3. "Give thy Holy Spirit to this infant that he may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen."

This chaste and beautiful prayer may be illustrated by the following texts of Scripture:

1. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,

a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—I. Pet. II. 9.

"Who hath saved us and *called us with an holy calling*, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."—II. Tim. I. 9.

"For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."—I. Cor. I. 21.

2. "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—II. Pet. III. 18.

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all, towards each other, aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith, in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure. Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer."—II. Thess. I. 3, 4, 5.

3. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by his grace, *we should be made heirs* according to the hope of eternal life."—Tit III. 5, 6, 7.

Hitherto the office, in as far as it referred to the congregation present, has been of a general character, and appears to be applicable to all. But now, having

conducted us through the nature of baptism, the blessings it confers and the promises attached to it, it proceeds in a particular exhortation, addressed solely to the sureties, to exact in return a promise of faith and obedience to the Divine commands. The Apostles, through the power of inspiration, were enabled to dispense with the several interrogatories by which this promise is elicited. By the gift of the Holy Ghost they could, in a miraculous manner, penetrate into a man's thoughts, and declare at once whether his faith was sincere, his motives worthy, and his intentions such as would entitle him to receive the benefits of the ordinance. The extraordinary effusion of the Spirit enabled them to do all this with unerring precision. But now the gift is withheld from the ministry: it being no longer useful, or rather necessary, to establish the kingdom of God in the world. The ministers of Christ have now no pretensions to the miraculous power which the Apostles enjoyed in this particular. They are sinful men; encompassed with many infirmities. They must therefore employ common means, for ascertaining in detail what the first preachers of the Gospel knew as it were by intuition.

For this reason the baptismal service in the third exhortation, after a short recapitulation of what has already been said and done, goes on to address the sureties in these terms:

"Wherefore, after this promise made by Christ, this infant must also faithfully for his part promise by you that are his sureties, (until he come of age to take it upon himself,) that he will renounce the Devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy word, and obediently keep his commandments."

Many well intentioned Christians scruple to take upon themselves the responsibility which these words imply: under a persuasion that circumstances will prevent them from acting up to the spirit of the promise which is thus exacted. The scruple however is unreasonable and without foundation. For the responsibility here implied is no more than the duty which the Scriptures inculcate upon all Christians, of "loving one another." And the Gospel was never intended to be a yoke upon us which we should not be able to bear: so that the duty of baptismal sureties may be modified by circumstances, but is neither one of danger or impossibility to the sincere christian.—Indeed in common cases it may be said to imply no more than a remonstrance with the parents on the part of the sponsors, if they neglect the religious improvement of the child; or a seasonable advice to the child himself, should he be disposed at any time to break the promise made for him at his baptism. This, as I take it, is the extent of the obligations which the promise lays on the sureties: and they are such as certainly no christian, friend, or relative, would deny to another. Should the vow, after all remonstrances and advices, be unhappily broken, the sponsors at last will have done their duty, and discharged the obligations they came under.

"*Renouncing the Devil and all his works*," is a sentence taken from the following passage of Scripture:

"He that committeth sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin."—1. John III. 8, 9.

See also that lucid passage of St. Paul, in Romans VI. from verse 3rd to verse 14, where the nature and consequences of baptism are fully set forth.

"The heir, so long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all; but is under Tutors and Governors until the time appointed of the Father."—Gal. IV. 1, 2.

After declaring the necessity of a promise being made, on the part of the child by the sureties, the office proceeds to ask a formal assent to its various provisions, by demanding,—

"Dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the Devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of this wicked world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh; so that thou wilt not follow nor be led by them?"

Answer.—"I renounce them all."

The necessity of discharging faithfully the duty which is implied in this question, not only in the name of a child, but for the sake of eternal salvation, may be proved from the following passages of Scripture:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."—1. John II. 15, 16

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—Rom. VIII. 12—14

"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."—1. John v. 19.

The Sponsors are next requested to express their assent to the several articles of the formula of faith, which is called the Apostle's Creed; and which is a comprehensive summary of the chief points of christian doctrine,—in these words:

"*Answer.*—All this I stedfastly believe."

This is supported by the following passage of Scripture:

"And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*"—Acts VIII. 36, 37.

The same text shews that there must be manifested not only some proof of faith, but also a desire to be baptized. Hence, the succeeding question demands of the Sponsors—

"Wilt thou be baptized in this faith? *Answer.*—That is my desire."

So soon as Paul and Silas had taught the Jailor of Philippi what he should do to be saved, he manifested the strongest desire to partake of the ordinance without the least delay.

"And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized he and all his straightway."—Acts XVI. 33.

Here it may be noticed, that there is no mention made in this passage of any profession of faith having been made by his household individually: so that we are justified in concluding that the household, as al-

ready argued, were admitted to the ordinance on the faith of the master or head of the family. On this fact the principle of sponsorship in baptism is established.

The next question is—

"Wilt thou then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?

Answer.—I will."

No one is able to keep the commandments of God, and walk according to his law blameless. The meaning of this question, therefore, extends only to the best efforts and endeavours to fulfil the promise, which human infirmities will permit the Sponsors to exercise. In the same qualified sense must likewise be understood the text, on which the query under consideration is founded. It is—

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."—Matt xix. 17. "How shall we, that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein?"—Rom. vi. 2.

The examination of the god-fathers and godmothers being now disposed of, the remainder of the office refers to the celebration of the ordinance itself, and the admission of the child to the congregation of Christ's flock. In proceeding with this, the most solemn part of the service, the minister is requested to make use of four brief but impressive prayers, for the infant's sanctification and growth in grace.

1. "O merciful God, grant that the old Adam in this child may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in him. Amen."

The blessing here prayed for, is thus illustrated by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians:

"Ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind: And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."—Ephes. II. 20—24.

2. "Grant that all carnal affections may die in him, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him. Amen."

This prayer is offered, because "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."—Rom VIII. 6. See also the whole passage from the quotation just made, to verse 18th of the same chapter.

3. "Grant that he may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the Devil, the world, and the flesh. Amen."

The spiritual strength implored for the child in this place, is explained by the Apostle as follows:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil."—Ephes. VI. 10, 11.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."—Same chapter, 13th verse.

"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."—I. John V. 4.

4. "Grant that whatsoever is here dedicated to thee by our office and ministry, may also be endued

with heavenly virtues, and everlastingly rewarded through thy mercy, O blessed Lord God, who dost live and govern all things world without end. Amen."

The authority for this petition is contained in the following texts:

"Who then is Paul and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted; Apollos watered: but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."—I. Cor. III. 5, 6.

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."—II. Cor. IV. 7.

Immediately after these collects, comes the prayer for the consecration or setting apart of the water for the solemn purpose of signifying the mystical washing away of sin. Dr. Nicholls informs us: "By a passage of St. Cyprian it should seem, that the ancient Christians had a custom in their baptism to have a consecratory prayer for the dedication of the baptismal water to the sacred use for which it was designed."—Note in loc. And the following text implies that the act of baptism ought at all times to be accompanied with suitable devotion and supplications. "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."—Acts XXII. 16.

Hitherto, then, in examining the contents of this office for the public baptism of infants, we find neither sentiment nor doctrine, that is not fully corroborated by the declarations of holy writ. Indeed, so anxious were the framers and compilers of it to conform in every respect to the revealed will of God, that they

have not only avoided every unscriptural tenet, but have, in most instances, made use of the very terms in which that will is made known to us. A closer connection,—a more complete digest of Divine truth,—than is here exhibited, no rational mind can expect or demand. Perhaps, indeed, a more perspicuous arrangement, in its various parts, or a loftier tone of piety, it would be impossible to embody in any human compilation.

SECTION 3.

THE RUBRICS WHICH DIRECT THE MODE OF BAPTISM.

"Then the Priest shall take the child into his hands, and shall say to the god-fathers and god-mothers:

Name this Child.

"And then, naming it after them—if they shall certify that the child may well endure it—he shall dip it in the water discreetly and warily, saying:

"*N. I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

"But if they certify that the child is weak, it shall suffice to pour water upon it, saying the aforesaid words."

The rubric for the private baptism of infants, directs the minister thus:

"And then the child, being named by some one that is present, the minister shall pour water upon it, saying these words:

N. I baptize thee, &c."

The office for the public baptism of such as are of riper years, directs the minister to proceed as follows:

"Then shall the priest take each person to be baptized by the right hand, and placing him conveniently by the font, according to his discretion, shall ask the god-fathers and god-mothers the name; and then shall dip him in the water, or pour water upon him, saying:

N. I baptize thee, &c."

I have placed these different rubrics together, in order that the reader may the more readily perceive the opinion which the Church of England expresses with regard to the mode of administering this Sacrament. She enjoins dipping: but permits sprinkling or pouring. In this, as well as in every other instance, where she affords rules for the guidance of her children, she conforms with the utmost strictness to the evident sense of Scripture. As it has been shown in a former Chapter, we have reason to suppose that the mode commonly practised by the first preachers of the Gospel was immersion: but then there are a few instances, in which, all circumstances considered, we have reason to believe that the sacrament was administered by sprinkling or affusion. The church, therefore, fearful of deciding where Scripture is silent, has permitted that either mode should be adopted; and that circumsances of various kinds, and the discretion of the parties concerned, should direct the choice of that mode which was thus rendered preferable. A more liberal and just construction of the meaning of Scripture than this, cannot well be imagined.

Dr. Nicholls observes on this subject: "Although

dipping or plunging into the water were the more ancient practice, and more universal in the primitive times; yet sprinkling or pouring water on the head of the baptized person, was of great antiquity in the Church likewise. It was observed in the cases of sick persons chiefly, who could not come to the public baptistry, nor could the weakness of their constitution admit of their being dipped all over in the water: and therefore the sprinkling or pouring of a small quantity of water on the face or head, was judged sufficient. In the fourth and fifth centuries aspersion was more common. After the heathen nations were converted to christianity, and by that means the baptism of adults were less frequent, the tenderness of children's bodies, especially in the colder countries, not enduring to be dipped in water, the use of sprinkling generally succeeded in the church, instead of that of dipping. And indeed, during the more early ages of the church, and when adults were frequently baptized, there were some particular cases when aspersion was used instead of immersion; as in that of some young women noticed by St. Chrysostom. Our church, with great moderation, does not totally lay aside immersion, if the strength of the child will bear it, as indeed it seldom will without danger in our cold country: in which case she admits aspersion only, rather than occasion any injury or danger to the body of a tender babe; wisely considering, that in the sight of God, *mercy is better than sacrifice.* Note in loc. A late Baptist writer, therefore, does not represent the directions of our church fairly, when he says—(Crawley's Treatise, p. 148)—on the authority of Dr. Wall, whom he partially quotes:—"The offices or liturgies, did all along enjoin dipping

without any mention of pouring or sprinkling, until the second year of Edward VI. when the order was that the priest should dip the child in water, with the addition, however, that if it were weak, it would suffice to pour water upon it. And thus the matter stands at the present day."

Now observe the sophistry of this passage. The common prayer book, compiled in the second year of King Edward the sixth, was the first, the very first attempt made in England, to embody the doctrines and tenets of the Reformation in the form of public devotion. The Reformers had just escaped from the galling yoke of Roman supremacy, and convened in convocation, by the authority of the King and the Protector Somerset, they compiled a Liturgy for the use of the Protestant Church of England, rejected the superstitious errors of popery, and restored as far as practicable the ancient doctrines and discipline. Among the errors so rejected, was the exclusive dipping of Infants at their baptism : and a discretionary power, vested in the parties concerned in the administration of the Sacrament, to choose which ever mode circumstances rendered advisable, was henceforth adopted as the rubric of our Church. It is not fair, therefore, to argue that immersion in Infant Baptism, because it had been practised by the corrupt Church of Rome, ought, on that account, to be a precedent for the Protestant Church of England. A reform took place ; a reform whose object was expressly to restore the ancient discipline and doctrines of the Christian Church, and which sanctioned both dipping and sprinkling in baptism, as being more conformable to antiquity and the practice of the first professors of the Gospel.

Accordingly Bishop Sparrow observes :—"Either of these modes of administering baptism is sufficient. For it is not in this spiritual washing, as it is in the bodily, where, if the bath be not large enough to receive the whole body, some parts may be foul when the rest are cleansed. The soul is cleansed after another manner : a little water can cleanse the believer, as well as a whole river. The old fashion was to dip or sprinkle the person *thrice*, to signify the mystery of the Trinity. The church so appointed them, because of some heretics that denied the Trinity ; upon the same ground, afterwards it was appointed to do it but once—signifying the moiety of substance in the Trinity—lest we should seem to agree with the heretics that did it thrice." *Note in loc.*

From these observations, therefore, it sufficiently appears, that what has been stigmatized as the commencement of an error, was in fact, the restoration of an ancient and significant practice.

The Rubric which directs that the child should be named in Baptism, is founded both upon Scripture and the ancient usage of the church.

"And it came to pass that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, they called him Zacharias after the name of his Father. And his mother answered and said, not so ; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, there is more of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and he wrote, saying, His name is John." *Luke* i. 59, 63.

"And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus,

which was so named of the Angel before he was conceived in the womb."—*Luke* II. 21.

Indeed the system of Antipædobaptism propounds nothing that attaches any feeling of devotion or piety to the naming of a child. In this respect it is decidedly regardless of the early impressions that may be made upon the youthful heart; putting the naming of a child, and the naming of a brute animal, exactly on the same footing. To say the least of it, it thus degrades the dignity which nature has evidently bestowed upon rational beings, by making them superior to the rest of the animal creation.

Of the form of words used in Baptism we need say no more than that they were prescribed by our Saviour himself.—*Mat.* XXVIII. 19.

On this subject Wheatly observes as follows:—"Now by baptizing in the name of three persons, is not only meant that it is done by the commission and authority of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but also that we are baptized into the faith of the Holy Trinity; and are received into that Society of men, who are distinguished from all false professions in the world, by believing in three persons and one God. This is the great fundamental article, on which all the rest depend, and to which they may be referred."—*Note in loco.*

The child having been baptized is received into the Church, with the form of words following:—

"We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock—[*here the Priest shall make a cross upon the child's forehead,*] and do sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and

manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the Devil ; and to continue Christ's faithful Soldier and servant unto his life's end. Amen."

Thus infant church membership, in accordance with the practice of the Jewish and the primitive churches, is fully recognized by our church : being convinced that it is sanctioned by the good will of our Saviour, and by the general tendency of the christian faith.

See 1 Cor. xii. 13. Also the following text : " God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." Gal. vi. 14.

" We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

" Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." —1 Tim. ii. 3.

From these and such texts, the church derives not only her authority, but even the phraseology, for receiving the infant member into her bosom, and for expressing a hope that he may ever continue in, and practice the good part on which he has entered.

The child being baptized, and thus received into the church, the minister is directed to address the following words to the whole congregation present :

" Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks to Almighty God for these benefits, and with one accord make our prayers unto him that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.

The former part of this exhortation has been oftentimes the subject of discussion, even in our own church. Some have imagined that the word *regenerate* is here improperly introduced; because an infant who can neither think nor speak cannot be said to be *regenerated* in the common acceptation of the term. For, say they, we can have no proof that the infant is actually regenerated: therefore we are uncertain whether it is so or not.

But this objection seems to arise chiefly from inattention to the meaning, which we ought in this place to attach to the term *regenerate*. The objectors appear to have confounded it with *conversion;* or rather to have given it the signification which conversion commonly implies, and which can only be manifested by good works. This opinion led, of course, to the belief, that in the case under consideration, it is a matter of great uncertainty whether the child has been regenerated or not, because he is incapable of exhibiting those effects, which, in all ages of the Church, have been considered the most convincing proof of a regenerated mind.

The fact, however, seems to be, that the compilers of the Liturgy have assigned a meaning to regenerate, which is quite distinct from that of conversion, and which may be sufficiently explained, by reference to a former part of the office. In the second Collect, we are taught to pray that the infant "may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration:" viz.—may be freed from the dominion of the sin which has descended to him from our first parents, by being brought to Christ in baptism. This is all that appears to be meant: and it is proposed to us, not as an ope-

ration that can be proved by specific results, but as a spiritual action upon the infant mind, which we are requested to receive as an article of faith: we cannot, of course, expect to discover any data by which we may conduct further argument on the subject.

The word in question is supported in the above meaning by the following passages of Scripture:

"For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body:"—which is Christ.—I. Cor. XII. 13.

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ."—Gal. III. 27.

"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."—II. Cor. V. 17.

"——be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins."—Acts II. 38.

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."—Tit. III. 5.

Now since infants are baptized into Christ's body, and have put on Christ, they are new creatures: that is, they are born again, or *regenerate.* And since they are baptized for the remission of sins, and since baptism is called the *washing* of *regeneration*; therefore they, having submitted to this washing, are consequently *regenerate.*

The latter part of the exhortation, calling upon the congregation "to give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits,"—is grounded upon the following passages:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."—Ps. CIII. 2.

"They lift up their voice to God with one accord,

and said: Lord thou art God, which hast made hea ven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is."—Acts iv. 24.

"Ye did run well: who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth."—Gal. v. 7.

See also Phil. i. 3—11.

SECTION 4.

THE CONCLUDING PRAYERS, AND EXHORTATION TO THE SURETIES.

After the admission of the child into the congregation of Christ's flock, the first act of devotion in which those present are requested to join "kneeling," is the Lord's Prayer. The reasons for introducing it in this place, are clearly set forth by Mr. Wheatly, in the following words:

"The Lord's prayer, having been prescribed by our Saviour to his disciples, as a badge of their belonging to him; it can never be more reasonable or proper to use it than now, when a new member and disciple is admitted into his Church. And therefore, whereas, in other offices, this prayer is generally placed in the beginning, it is here reserved till after the child is baptized, and received solemnly into the Church: when we can more properly call God "Our Father," with respect to the infant, who is now, by baptism, made a member of Christ, and more peculiarly adopted a child of God. And this is exactly conformable to the primitive Church: for the Catechumens were never allowed to use this prayer, till they had first made themselves sons, by regeneration in the waters of baptism. For which reason, this

prayer is frequently, by the ancient writers, called the prayer of the "regenerate," or "believers," as being, properly speaking, their privilege and birth-right."—*Note in loc.*

The Lord's prayer being concluded, the people present are next exhorted to join the minister in a special act of thanksgiving for the spiritual benefits, which have been conferred on the infant in baptism. The Collect, which embodies these feelings of grateful adoration, is made up of two parts, which, like all other passages in this office that we have hitherto examined, are remarkable for their appropriateness, and the chasteness of their phraseology. The first part expresses profound gratitude, for the addition that has just been made to the Redeemer's fold; the second part prays for the infant member's future growth in grace and spiritual improvement. It is as follows:

"We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church. And humbly we beseech thee to grant, that he, being dead unto sin, and living unto righteousness, and being buried with Christ in his death,—may crucify the old man and utterly abolish the whole body of sin, and that, as he is made a partaker of the death of thy Son, he may also be a partaker of his resurrection: so that, finally, with the residue of thy holy Church, he may be an inheritor of thine everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

That the regenerated infant is received as God's own child by adoption, we learn from Galatians iv. 4, 5.—"God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made

under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons."

Since, then, the baptized child is in Christ, he is redeemed: and since he is redeemed, he has consequently received the adoption of a Son. Therefore, he is a child of God.

The reference made in this Collect to the "being buried with Christ in his death," appears to have been suggested by what the Apostle says in Romans vi. 5, 6.—"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed; that henceforth we should not serve sin."

The sentiments expressed towards the end, seem to have been taken from the following passage: "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general Assembly and Church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."—Heb. xii. 22, 23.

Dean Comber has these remarks on this part of the office: "In this second part of the prayer also, we have a precedent in the Jewish rites after circumcision: only that our prayers are more spiritual; for inward grace rather than outward blessings; and good reason, for all the benefits of baptism will vanish unless they be afterwards improved; they will not have their full effect unless the conditions be performed. Neither we do, nor did the primitive Church believe them to be so regenerate or so endued with the Spirit, but that by sloth and wilful iniquity they

may be deprived of all again: their corruptions are not so mortified, but that by compliance and base negligence they may revive again, so that the last state shall be worse than the first, and it shall be more tolerable for heathens, than for vile apostates. Wherefore we beg most humbly and earnestly that this child may live as one upon whom such great favours are bestowed."—*Note in loc.*

The blessings referred to in this thanksgiving, are thus briefly and succinctly named in the Church Catechism; in the answer to the second question: "My Godfathers and Godmothers, in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

That the infant became, by baptism, a "member of Christ," and a "child of God," we have already seen: and here the Church evidently takes it for granted that her prayer respecting the inheritorship has been complied with; and that if the child should die before the commission of any actual sin, he should certainly enjoy the inheritance of the saints in light through eternity. Indeed the Apostle expressly declares this: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." These words, therefore, authorize us to assume that a joint heirship with Christ in the kingdom of heaven, is one of the privileges of infant baptism; one which, in whatsoever sense we understand the words "kingdom of heaven," is of high and inestimable value, calculated to excite our hopes and allay our fears,—to help us forward in our spiritual course,—placing before us the prize of our high calling in God, through Christ Jesus.

"These then," says Archbp. Lecker, "are the

privileges of the Christian Covenant: and for these, we must give due '*thanks to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light.*'—Col. i. 12.; and be duly careful to '*walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his kingdom of glory.*'—1. Thess. ii. 12. For we have a right to the privileges of the Covenant, only on the supposition and presumption of our performing the obligations of it.—Children, indeeed, of Believers, who are taken out of the world before they become capable of faith and obedience, we doubt not, are happy. For the general declarations of holy writ plainly comprehend their case: and our Saviour hath particularly declared that 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.'—Luke xviii. 16. But all who live to maturer years; as on the one hand, they may entitle themselves, through God's bountiful promise, tho' not their own merit, to higher degrees of future felicity, in proportion as their service has been considerable; so on the other, they are entitled to no degree at all, any longer than they practice that *holiness* in which they have engaged to live, and *without* which, 'no man shall see the Lord.'—Heb. xii. 14. We shall be acknowledged as children, only whilst we obey our heavenly Father: and the baptism which saveth us, not the outward putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the inward answer of a good conscience towards God." 1. Peter iii. 21. *Lectures on Catechism.*

Hence, therefore, the phraseology of our Liturgy, both in the baptismal office and in the catechism, with regard to the effects of this Sacrament, is fully supported by the declarations of Holy writ: nothing appears to be asserted but what can be demonstrated,

with the utmost logical precision, to be in accordance with the word of God. Its compilers, well knowing that it must have necessarily undergone the severest scrutiny in the hands of both supporters and opponents, before its reputation could be fully established, seem to have exercised the nicest judgment and discrimination, with a view to render it as faultless as possible. Those who have taken the pains to examine it, and to compare it with the Scripture, have not hesitated to pronounce it, in point of pious feeling and literary excellence, to be inferior only to the compilations of inspired men. The encomium here implied, it will, no doubt, carry down with it to the remotest posterity; in whatever terms those who differ from its doctrines may attempt to slander it, or however broad the slander may be.*

The office under consideration, having directed thanksgiving to be rendered for the benefits bestowed in baptism, goes on to exhort the sureties on the subject of the promise which they gave in behalf of the child.

"Forasmuch as this child hath promised by you, his sureties, to renounce the Devil and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve him, ye must remember that it is your parts and duties to see that this infant be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession, he hath here made by you."

The sentiments here conveyed, are in perfect accordance with the declarations of the word of God:

"Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child,

* Crawley's Treatise, p. 159.

differeth not from a servant, though he be lord of all: but is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father."—Gal. iv. 1, 2.

"I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children."—Deuter. iv. 10.

"When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools:—pay that which thou hast vowed."—Eccles. v. 4.

The exhortation proceeds:

"And that he may know these things the better, ye shall call upon him to hear sermons, and chiefly ye shall provide that he shall learn the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments, in the vulgar tongue, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health."

This advice is founded on the certain truth that—"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."—Rom. x. 17.

"I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."—i. Cor. iii. 2.

"Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."—Heb. v. 14.

"Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."—Ephes. vi. 4.

"By him, all that believe are justified."—Acts. xiii. 39.

"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."—John viii. 24.

The exhortation then alludes to the object to be kept in view.

"And that this child may be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a christian life; remembering always that baptism doth represent unto us our profession, which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that, as he died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living."

The metaphors that are here used, in reference to the effects of baptism, are taken from Romans VI. from verse 3rd. to 14.

The office then concludes by a brief advice relative to the apostolical rite of confirmation, and a declaration that—"It is certain, by God's word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved."

We shall conclude these observations on the baptismal office, by adding a few remarks on its arrangement, sentiments, and phraseology.

1. The arrangement observed in the compilation,—not only of the office which we have just examined, but also of those for private baptism, and for the baptism of such as are of riper years,—is so admirable, and so well calculated to excite and lead the devotion of all concerned in the proper channel, that we cannot conceive that it would admit of improvement, in any particular. It begins by propounding the doctrines which Scripture has taught us concerning this Sacrament, and by devoutly praying for the Divine

blessing on the undertaking now commenced. It recites, and comments upon a passage of Scripture—Mark x. 13, 14.—in which our Saviour's regard for infant children is especially declared; with a view, no doubt, of strengthening and confirming the faith of those concerned, as well as of convincing them of our Lord's good will towards all little children. It then proceeds to question the Sponsors, on behalf of the child to be baptized, in the principal articles of the christian faith; because we do not read in any part of Scripture, that persons who did not individually exhibit certain proofs of faith, were received into the Church by baptism, excepting servants or households, whose master or mistress were a believer.

These preliminary matters being gone through, and the subject being thus brought clearly and summarily under the view of the sponsors and congregations, the act of baptism is solemnly administered, and the child received into the ark of Christ's Church. Thus, the devotional feelings of all present are raised; and cherished by continual reference to the words of Scripture, and by regular prayer at the throne of grace, at every important part of the ordinance. We are consequently prepared to be in that state of mind and heart, which will enable us, in a suitable manner, to join in praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God, for the benefits which are conferred on us in the Sacrament of baptism.

The whole is concluded by a grave and weighty exhortation to the sureties, on the subject of the engagement into which they have just entered; and of the obligations which it necessarily lays upon them.—An advice is added on the subject of confirmation;

because the sureties cannot be said to have discharged the whole of their obligations, until confirmation shall have been administered. Now, in all this arrangement there is such order and regularity,—such minute attention to the component parts of true devotional feeling, that we humbly conceive that any attempt to alter or change it, would be immediately perceived to be a blemish.

2. The sentiments contained in it are founded upon the doctrines and declarations of Scripture. They are those of unfeigned and fervent piety; of pure and exalted devotion. Indeed it may be said with truth, that no one can read this office from beginning to end, in a serious and teachable frame of mind, without being the better for it. The sentiments which it breathes, are so elevated and exalted that they tend to raise our thoughts from every thing transitory and earthly, and to fix them on the origin of our being, on our lost condition by nature, and on the redemption purchased for us by Jesus Christ. We are filled with gratitude for the mercies thus vouchsafed to us and to all mankind: and feel a personal interest in the solemn ceremony. We are thus called upon, not only by the closest sympathy, but even by a reasonable desire to obtain remission of our sins, through the merits of Christ crucified, to join fervently and devoutly in all its parts. We are successively reminded of the death and resurrection of Christ, and their connection with the ways of sin and the works of righteousness; of the close relation with him, into which our own baptism has brought us; and of the various privileges, which have therein been conferred upon us. And finally, we gather from the whole, that there is none

other name under heaven, given to men, by whom and through whom we may receive health and salvation, but only the name of Jesus Christ the righteous.

3. The phraseology employed in this office, is, like every thing else connected with it, in perfect accordance with the word of God. There is not a sentence in it, from beginning to end, but what appears to have been well considered in reference to scripture language; and where words from particular and appropriate texts could have been properly introduced, they were in every instance preferred. Indeed, this has been carried so far as I trust may be sufficiently proved from the quotations with which it is above interlined, that there is scarcely a sentence to be found throughout the whole, in which Scriptural phrases are not introduced. Moreover, the sentiments and expressions seem so natural and so well adapted to each other, that one would imagine the composition to be a model of simplicity. But every one knows that the perfection of art consists in not appearing to practice it. Hence this may be esteemed as a model of devotional composition.

In this light, with how much comfort and satisfaction one can join in this office; knowing that it is clothed in those very expressions in which prophets, apostles, and martyrs, have, in times past, poured forth the revelations of God to mankind.

There is something in the idea of using the same devotional exercises with those saints and servants of the Lord, who have gone before us into glory; something which gives a zest to our piety, and energy to our devotional feelings; something which draws our souls into a closer communion with whatever is great,

and holy, and good, in the annals of our race; than could have been done by any language or phraseology, which might be suggested without previous consideration.

Let us then hold in its just estimation this monument of the learning, piety, and research, of our ancestors; convinced that it is built on the rock of ages, and that every attempt to prove it to be otherwise built, must be abortive,—a circumstance which adds another argument to the many already brought forward, that the Holy Scriptures must be first shewn to be untrue or spurious, before the baptismal offices of the Church of England can be made to appear unscriptural, either in doctrine or phraseology.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION.

SECTION 1.

AN ADDRESS TO THOSE WHO NEGLECT OR ARE RELUCTANT TO BRING THEIR CHILDREN TO BAPTISM.

My Brethren:

In bringing the subject of the foregoing Chapters to a conclusion by a special address to you, permit me to assure you that I have no other motive in view than an anxiety for your spiritual and eternal interests. I have left my home, my country, and my friends, and have travelled upwards of two thousand miles, for the express purpose of declaring the truth as it is in Christ Jesus; acting as it were—however unworthily—as his ambassador. It would, therefore, be very inconsistent indeed with the object which brought me across the Atlantic, if I were to address you on this subject with any other view, than what relates to the salvation of your immortal souls. That the result of my humble labours has not at all times been such as could have been wished, I readily concede: but my anxiety for your spiritual welfare has been sincere and unceasing, and for ultimate results I rely upon the Providence of God.

It is this anxiety that gave rise to the preceding observations on the subject of Infant baptism. Situated as I am in a populous part of the country, where the great majority of the inhabitants disregard this solemn institution, I could not have failed to reflect often upon their spiritual condition, and to ask myself the question—Are these people, in neglecting to bring their children to baptism, obeying the Scriptures?—or are they committing a sin against God, by neglect or delay in this particular? In discovering answers to these queries, I was led to search more narrowly than ever the Scriptures, and to ascertain the practice and opinion of the Christian Church at different ages, on the subject. The result of this enquiry is now before you.

It is needless for me to declare most solemnly that I have advanced nothing in the course of this work but what I believe to be the truth. I have composed it in the fear of God; and I humbly trust under the guidance of his Spirit. I am sensible too, that I must give an account of it at the day of judgement; and pray sincerely that the Divine blessing may accompany it, to the enlightenment of those that are in error, and to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom upon earth: so that the account may be rendered with joy, and not with grief.

Infant Baptism is a subject which invites enquiry, both from those who disapprove of it, and those who receive it as an ordinance of Divine appointment. By investigating all the matters connected with it, the former may be led to see reason for altering their opinions; at least for not opposing it as if it were of human origin; and the latter will be led to perceive

the foundation of the whole superstructure, resting as it does upon the evidence of Scripture, and the practice of the Church in every age. I am very sure that the great bulk of those whom I am now addressing, have never made such enquiry as may be sufficient for enabling them to form an opinion of their own upon the subject. They are too apt to be swayed in their judgment by the opinions of those around them, and are for the most part satisfied with taking this part of their religion on hearsay. But this is not sufficient: this partial investigation or scrutiny into important facts, relative to our souls' eternal interest, will not stand us in good stead at the bar of our Almighty Judge. We must search deeper; search for ourselves, and be assured that we are not following a vain shadow, but performing the revealed will of God with diligence and godly fear.

For this reason, let me request your indulgence, while I take a rapid glance at the most prominent arguments that have been illustrated in the preceding chapters.

1. First of all, you will observe, that there is not one word between the two boards of the Bible, which can be turned, in any way whatever, into a prohibition of infant baptism. We have reason to suppose that if any degree of guilt were attached to this ordinance, it would have been distinctly stated to be so, in the word of God. Many passages there are, which denounce delay in repentance as dangerous, and therefore in some measure criminal; we find denunciations made against those who neglect the worship of God, and desecrate his sabbaths. Men are blamed for coming near unto him with their mouths, whilst

their hearts are far from him. They are reproved for observing days, and distinctions of food, according to the manner of the heathens. But we never find them reproved for bringing their children to baptism.

There is not one passage, that will bear any construction amounting to such a reproof. And as the Scriptures, either directly or otherwise, describe those actions which imply any degree, however small, of criminality, we are very certain that if infant baptism were a sin, it would have been denounced as such. There is, however, no such denunciation. You may be very sure, therefore, that in bringing your children to baptism, you are committing no sin.

2. On the contrary, the general tenor of Scripture gives us reason to suppose that, by baptizing children, we are acting in perfect conformity with its spirit and tendency. The book which we receive at the present day as the Book of God, was first made known unto the nation of the Jews. The declarations which it contained, respecting their condition and future prospects, led the wise and the good amongst them to believe, that, as a nation, they were destined for high and mighty enterprizes. The types of their religion, and the ceremonial of their worship, taught them to expect a deliverer, to whom they were accustomed to look forward with joy and triumph. The doctrine of the atonement, as represented in their sacrifices and oblations, they were in the habit of looking upon as only half revealed, if I may so express myself; believing that, at some future period, one should arise up amongst them, who, coming in the power and authority of Elias, should give them further information regarding this interesting subject. Their prophets,

more especially, conceived these views of the times and achievements of the Messiah. They looked forward to the sufferings of Christ, as the means of their reconciliation with God. Our Saviour himself, in accordance with this expectation, declares that he "came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it." And the apostle assures us that the law was a "schoolmaster to bring men to Christ." The Jewish and Christian Churches, therefore, are closely connected. They have a chief reference to the same heavenly personage. The former is the platform on which the latter has been modelled. The former shews the first working and practical results of an important principle; the latter expands that principle and extends its application. The Law and the Gospel, although not the same, are yet very similar in their object and tendency. Both are intended to bring men to Christ for the sake of everlasting happiness. The ceremonies of the one may therefore be taken as precedents in those of the other. For instance, the sacrifices and offerings and oblations of the mosaic ritual, correspond with the great Christian Sacrifice on the cross. The paschal Lamb of the former dispensation formed the precedent for the Lord's Supper under the latter; our Saviour being denominated, in reference to this particular, "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." And in the same way may we consider the circumcision of the Jewish Church as a precedent for the baptism of infants in the Christian Church. The type, the shadow, admitted infants into church membership; why not the reality:—the visible Church, under the Gospel dispensation?

3. Reflect further with an enquiring mind on the nature and tendency of the Christian Church. The Redeemer's kingdom upon earth is, we are told, designed for the various nations, and kindred, and people, who inhabit the world. From Jerusalem, and the land of Judea, it has now been travelling for upwards of eighteen hundred years: and its boundaries are still extending. We have reason to believe that no limit will be put to its extent, except the utmost bounds of the earth. In all this, we perceive the hand of Providence acting in accordance with the ancient prophecy, which declares that the knowledge of the Lord should cover the face of the earth, even as the waters cover the face of the deep. And I have shown at large, in a former section, that all persons living in a christian country, owe it as a duty to their heavenly Father, to do every thing in their power to forward this evident design of his Providence. It is a duty incumbent upon them to provide, in the first place, for the permanency of the Redeemer's kingdom among the rising generation; and then to extend their exertions to the benighted lands of the heathen. Now the only conceivable way, in which the first of these duties can at all be accomplished, upon rational principles, is by admitting the rising generation into the Church as early as possible. I know very well that many, who differ from me on this subject, will tell you that this is not the way to continue the worship of the true God and the religion of Christ among men. But if you just consider for a minute or two, you will find it to be absolutely impossible for them to find proof for this assertion. It is impossible to prove that adult baptism only, is the best and most effectual means of

giving a permanent footing in a country to the christian religion. It is impossible, for this simple reason, that since the beginning of christianity no country has been inhabited exclusively by Anabaptists. Therefore no practical proof can be brought forward. It is very well to talk of what would be done, and what might be done: we look to what has actually been done, and to that only. The Baptist writers are not borne out in their theories with regard to this part of the subject, by the prevalence of infant baptism around them. They may easily assert that their principles are the only ones that will lead to the ultimate triumph of the Gospel, whilst religion is supported around them, and cherished on other principles which they affect to despise. But leave them to their own resources—give them an extensive territory for the full exercise and developement of their religious theory, and they will have an opportunity of ascertaining how far they may be borne out in their opinions.—Until this is accomplished—until a full proof is exhibited of the excellence and superiority of such religious notions, we, as well as every body else, have a just right to question the probability of the ultimate results which are so loudly advocated. Indeed, so far am I from being influenced by these speculations about matters which may come to pass, that I am verily and truly of opinion that infant baptism is one of the means, in the hands of Providence, for continuing the blessings of christianity among men; and that, if men were to grow up to years of manhood before their dedication to God in baptism, it would be ten to one whether they would ever become christians at all. Indeed I am very certain, if I may judge from

my observations since I came to this Province, that, should anabaptist principles be universally prevalent, the greater part of the people would grow up and live without God and without Christ in the world; and that sooner or later the abominations that maketh desolate, would overspread the land. You perceive then, that with a view to the permanency of the christian religion upon earth, infant baptism is necessary, and ought to be practised on the same principle, apart from every personal consideration, on which you support charities for the diffusion of Gospel truth and the blessings of revelation.

4. Consider too that our Saviour, whilst upon earth, shewed his good will towards children. He rebuked those that would have kept them from him; took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them; declaring that of such was the kingdom of heaven. Now you may easily conceive that if it was criminal to admit children to the church of Christ, he himself would have declared so on this occasion. He would have told the people to keep them off; to take them away until they were grown up; and then to make them his disciples. He would have shown the impropriety of bringing children, who could not reason, nor declare their faith, unto him for the purpose of putting his hands upon them. But did he do so? Did he utter one sentiment from which we might infer that he intended to inculcate the exclusive doctrine of adult baptism? No: on the contrary he expressly says: "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Here our Saviour expressly says that children are fit to be members of the kingdom of heaven, which,

in this passage, means the visible Church on earth. To make them members of that Church is the express intention of baptism; which is no more than the declaration of our Lord warrants respecting them.

5. Now if infant baptism be not opposed to the sentiments expressed by our Saviour regarding children, we have reason to believe that it will also be in accordance with several leading doctrines of the christian faith. This you will find to be actually the case in a remarkable degree, if you will just take the trouble to reflect for a few moments on the doctrine of original sin, and its disastrous consequences to man. Through the transgression of our first parents, death passed upon all men. All mankind in a state of nature are sinful before God; and in proportion to their sin will be the amount of their punishment. Here I beg of you not to give too much heed to those who confidently assert that the mercy of God is more than abundantly sufficient for saving the souls of those who die before the commission of any actual sin. God is indeed merciful: but he is also just. And his mercy will never be exercised to the prejudice of his justice. That justice declares that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, in whatever shape it may appear before him. You may therefore be assured that, as no exception is made, this assertion applies also to original sin. The proportion of guilt or of punishment in this case it is impossible for us to determine. It is not revealed to us in the Scripture, and therefore must be regarded as one of the hidden mysteries of God. We are sure, however, that as in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive. Whatever de-

gree of guilt may have passed upon mankind in consequence of Adam's transgression, is fully removed by the sufferings and death of Christ. It is for this reason that our Saviour said to Nicodemus "except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now from these facts you can easily perceive that two very important truths are deducible: first, the salvation of infants who die before they are baptized is extremely doubtful: secondly, by being baptized with water,—or as the above text says, born of water and the Spirit,—they are made to see or to be members of the kingdom of God, which is the visible church on earth. In this sanctuary there can be no doubt of their salvation, if they happen to be called hence before the commission of any actual sin. Why then withhold from your offspring those spiritual benefits which are promised to the heirs of the kingdon, when it so evidently tends to their spiritual advantage to be partakers of them? Why withhold from them that baptism which is the outward sign of an inward and spiritual grace, and which the Holy Scriptures declare to be the "laver of regeneration?"

Let me even go further, and appeal to your natural feelings as parents. Is there a father or a mother amongst you, who would not wish to avoid every uncertainty respecting the ultimate salvation of their children? Where, for instance, is the mother that could calmly see her child going away from her by degrees, a blossom perishing in her arms, and not feel an anxiety about its future welfare? You are careful enough to train your offspring as early as possible to the particular vocation which you mean

them to pursue through life: you are anxious that no time be lost. Why not apply the same rule to their spiritual nurture? Why not dedicate them to God as early as the Scriptures declare them to be fit for such dedication? You are willing to believe that even in the worst case the mercy of God is a sufficient guarantee for the future happiness of your child: and therefore you are less careful about religious ordinances. But why trust to the Divine mercy to this unwarrantable extent, when you have evidently neglected to use the means which God himself has prescribed? Do you imagine that this gracious attribute of the Deity will be extended to cover your negligence or dereliction of duty? Surely it cannot. And should the feelings of the parents be powerfully excited as to the spiritual condition of a child who died unbaptized, they have only themselves to blame. The pain they suffer in consequence is of their own neglect.

6. Besides, consider attentively the example which the apostles have left us. They received their instructions from our Saviour himself. They were commissioned to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them. Now whatever meaning modern commentators may attach to the words of our Lord's commission to his disciples, we may be very sure that the persons to whom they were addressed understood them perfectly in their true sense. To us, at this distance of time, they appear to convey a very general meaning; and to include infants as well as grown up persons. There is not a hint even, in all the Acts of the Apostles, or in any of the Epistles, which will appear to militate against this general construction. Nay, on

the contrary there are many passages which, as I have abundantly illustrated and shown, seem to confirm the opinion that the Apostles actually baptized children with their own hands. And if you will take up your Bible and examine minutely all the passages which are explained in the former part of this treatise, you will perceive that in every instance where the baptism of adults is recorded, there were circumstances which, without at all involving the principle of infant baptism, render it improbable that it could have been administered to children. In the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch, for instance, and in those of single believers, adult baptism only took place: because there were no infants to baptize. But in the case of Lydia and the Philippian Jailor, whole households were received into the church by baptism on the faith of the master or mistress. In these households, it is extremely probable that there must have been children and young persons. This is certainly more probable than the contrary supposition. At all events, if it were inconsistent with our Saviour's commission to administer baptism to infants, we may feel sure enough that some intimation would have been given to that effect, in cases where the distinction might be introduced with propriety. But we find no distinction made: rational probability, therefore, gives us ground for believing that the apostles baptized children.

7. Again, it is of extreme importance that in reading over passages of Scripture where baptism by the Apostles is recorded, you bear in mind the peculiar circumstances in which the first Christians were placed. The world was not then as it is now. Eigh-

teen hundred years brought about a wonderful revolution, not only in its political aspects, but in its moral character. In the times of the Apostles, the people among whom they lived, were in the greatest possible darkness regarding the eternal interests of their souls. The great bulk of them were sunk in vice and iniquity: and it required the efforts of persevering exhortation and argument, to convince them of the wickedness of their lives. A calm and extensive reflection on the nature of the soul and its future destinies, was necessary in order to turn the sensualist from the evil of his ways unto the worship and fear of the true God. A process of reasoning, based upon such reflection, and supported by the miraculous gifts which were poured out on the Apostles, soon brought the individual into a proper frame of mind, and rendered him sensible of the necessity of salvation through Christ. But the mind of a grown-up person, and of him only, could be influenced by this process of reasoning. The intellect of a child or of a youth could not be reasonably expected to be affected by it in the proper manner. It is evident therefore, at first sight, from the character of primitive times, that adults would be the first converts, and the first subjects of the baptismal ordinance. And to say that adults, and they alone, are the proper subjects for baptism at the present day, would be to suppose that our land is still in heathen darkness: that the light of Christianity has not yet shone on us: and that we are on the same footing, in point of moral rectitude, with the heathens of old. This, I have no doubt, you will be ready to exclaim against, as a libel upon our country and our character: yet, by inference, the principles of adult

baptism imply as much. For if you argue that adult baptism is the only true baptism in this christian country; because the Apostles, from the necessity of the case, practised it, in the first instance in a heathen country; then by inference, which is as clear as the Sun at noonday, you put both yourselves and your countrymen on a level with the heathens who knew not God; neither was his law in their heart.

8. Consider further the evidence which the first Christian writers afford us on the subject. Many of these men lived in the time of the Apostles, and thus had full opportunity to know the truth; but as they could not foresee that doubts on this subject should prevail to such extent in our day, they have not furnished us with that distinct and defined information, which puts the matter beyond all dispute. But they have left us quite enough of evidence to convince every rational and sober mind that the practice of baptizing infants prevailed in the Church from the earliest period of her history. Towards the close of the second century, more especially, we find this to be the case. Reference is made to the ordinance thus administered, in such terms as to leave no doubt on the mind of the candid reader as to its propriety and authenticity. I have endeavoured to give you a brief outline of this matter in a former chapter, and to that permit me again to refer you.

9. There is one particular connected with this branch of the evidence, which is very important, and therefore deserves a separate notice. In the numerous writings of the first christians we cannot discover the remotest allusion to infant baptism as an innovation in the Church. If we do not admit that it was

introduced by the Apostles from the beginning, there is no period of ecclesiastical history that we can point out as the time of its adoption. No author or writer of the three first centuries of the christian era, says a word or sentence which will lead us to believe that it was introduced after the time of the Apostles. And yet it is very certain that it prevailed in the Church within the period just specified. The question therefore naturally arising from this circumstance, is—"who began first to practice infant baptism?" But the query is not so easily answered as it may be propounded. No answer in fact can be given: except that, since there is great probability, if not direct proof, that the apostles baptized infants, and since we do not read of the introduction of the practice at any subsequent period, it must have existed from the very beginning of the Christian era.

This argument acquires additional force if you will contrast the omission in question with the mention of other errors that early crept into the church. The errors of the Pelagians, of the Arians, and of the Montanists, are all regularly noticed, and the circumstances of their rise and progress minutely detailed. The date of their introduction is fixed with precision: their authors, with their motives and characters, are distinctly held forth as the subjects of much controversy and discussion. But amidst all these disputes, we do not read one word concerning a baptismal controversy, until the time of Tertullian, whose opinion stood alone, and was inconsistent with the established practice of the Church. The different parties, whatever might have been their peculiar doctrines or tenets, received infant baptism as of divine institution. This

view of the case, is to my mind a moral proof that the sacred ordinance of baptism has been regularly administered to children by the Apostles and their immediate successors in the ministry.

10. Not to draw out this enumeration of arguments to too great a length, I will add one more, which, if we had no other, is in my judgment quite sufficient to put the matter beyond all doubt. And this is the universal prevalence of infant baptism at the present day, among every sect and denomination of Christians, the Antipædobaptists, and one or two others excepted. Take any denomination you choose, examine their doctrines and their tenets, and you will find that infant baptism occupies a prominent place in their religious observances. Look, for instance, at the Church of Rome, which includes such a vast bulk of the inhabitants of Christendom, and you will discover that she has practised this ordinance from time immemorial. If you examine her history, you will not find any period when her practice has been different. The Greek Church, likewise, in which modern commentators agree in saying that the apostolical observances are found in greater purity than in most others, —the Greek Church declares infant baptism to be scriptural, and acts accordingly. The Lutherans, the Dutch Reformed, all the Presbyterian Churches, both in Scotland and America, to say nothing of our own Church, and the different dissenting bodies in England and Ireland—all these branches of the Christian Church, however widely they may differ in other matters, are still unanimous in receiving infant baptism as a scriptural and significant rite. Now, if you take the trouble to sum up the gross amount of mem-

bers, who compose the Pædobaptist Churches of Christendom, you will find it to contain a vast number of human beings, each of whom has an immortal soul to save. Again, if you sum up the amount of all the members of the Baptist Church, both in England and Germany, and in America, you will discover that they bear a very small proportion to those who think differently on the Sacrament of baptism. You will find that the proportion, as nearly as I am able to make it out, is somewhere about one to a hundred, perhaps not so much. But for the sake of argument, allow it to be one in a hundred.

Supposing now, that any of you wished to ascertain a particular fact relative to a transaction that occurred in a distant country and in a remote period; supposing further that you conducted the investigation by examining witnesses, and that for every hundred witnesses that stated the matter to be so and so, one witness declared the contrary; supposing all this, on which side of the question would you consider the strongest evidence and best proof to have been elicited? You will instantly reply, decidedly on that side corroborated by a hundred witnesses, and opposed only by one. Now it is exactly the same in the case under consideration.—For every one that opposes infant baptism, either in theory or practice, one hundred confirm it. And even on the principle of abstract reasoning, and with the most rigid application of logical principles, you will readily imagine that it is much more likely that the one individual should be labouring under a mistake, than that one hundred people of equal intelligence and information, could have been grossly

deceived all their lives. This argument is conclusive, and cannot be overturned without offering violence to the sentiments inculcated by christian charity.

11. Putting the same incontrovertable fact in another point of view, you will see equal reason for adopting the same conclusion. Arguing from the almost universal prevalence of infant baptism in the Christian Churches at the present day, we shall arrive at strong and cogent proof that it must have prevailed in the days of the Apostles. For take notice, the Christian Sabbath is observed by every sect and denomination of professing Christians; and they know it to have been kept on the first day of the week, by the Apostles and their followers, in honour and comemoration of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. It has been uninterruptedly kept ever since its first institution, with the same view and object with which it was first observed. Knowing this to be actually true, we have an actual and incontrovertable proof, in the universal observance of the Christian Sabbath, that our Lord rose from the dead as recorded in the Gospels. It is a palpable proof which on reflection will appear conclusive. In the same way the annual observance of Easter is a proof of the same event: the observance of Good Friday, an evident testimony of our Saviour's crucifixion: and so of all the other fasts and festivals, which are wisely enjoined to be observed by our Ritual. The annual observance of them is a practical proof that the events which they are severally intended to commemorate, did actually happen.

Now apply the same principle to the universal prevalence of infant baptism, and you will find that the

result will convey an equal degree of certainty with the cases already cited. For if the great body of the Christian world do now practice this ordinance, and if we can discover no period in the history of the Christian Church from its earliest ages in which it has not been practised; then it is clear it must have been practised by the Apostles and their successors. We are as sure of this as we are that every return of the Sabbath commemorates the resurrection of our Lord from the dead.

But I am afraid that I am becoming rather prolix in these matters; so with your leave I will now change the subject, and say a few words on the mode of baptism.

On this part of the subject you are perhaps aware that the Church of England holds no controversy with the Antipædobaptists. She admits in the fullest sense that dipping was the most ancient, as well as the most significant mode of administering the sacrament. With this view, she has enjoined, as we have seen, dipping in her offices. But then she gives to her members a greater latitude in this respect than the Baptists approve of, and she refers to Scripture as her authority for doing so. For according to the best interpretation that is given of the passages in which the mode of administration is in any way alluded to, or from the circumstances related, in which it may be inferred, we find that pouring, sprinkling, and dipping, have been severally used in the primitive Church. More importance seems to have been attached to the inward and spiritual grace, than to the outward form. For this reason there is no particular mode enjoined in Scripture. And from its silence we may naturally

conclude that the manner of administration must have been in a great measure regulated originally by circumstances or emergencies of a particular description. Of this evident choice our Church availed herself, and is supported by the word of God in her determination.

I have often indeed been asked whether I would consider myself authorized by the Rubric of the Church, whose doctrines on this head I have endeavoured, however imperfectly and feebly, to explain, to baptize by immersion? Most certainly I would.—I am not only authorized to use this mode, but enjoined to adopt it in preference to any other. And if the requisite preparations were fitted up in the Church, as in primitive times,—that is, a Baptistery with a commodious font in it,—I do not see how, consistently with my ordination vows, I could refuse to baptize by immersion those who wished to be admitted in that way to the Christian Church. But certainly there is nothing in the character of these modern times, nor in the political position of the Church, that can justify the unseemly custom of immersing people in ponds or rivers, in the presence of assemblages who are brought together more by curiosity than by devotion. To say the least of it, we may consider it as an affected imitation of the ancient mode to which no merit whatever can be attached. For it is not the quantity of water used, nor the manner of its application, that constitutes Christian Baptism, but the inward purification of the heart and mind.

SECTION 2.

FALLACIES POINTED OUT.

Having, in the foregoing section, taken a brief survey of the most prominent arguments that establish the divine authority of infant baptism as a Sacrament in the Christian Church, let me now request your serious attention, while I endeavour to guard you against the artful sophistry of some arguments and modes of reasoning, by which the principles above illustrated are commonly opposed. In so doing, I will endeavour to make use of such language as will give offence to none of those who adopt such arguments. My object shall be merely to point out their fallacy, of which perhaps the authors may not have thought at the time of composing their remarks.

1. One great fallacy in the reasoning of Antipædobaptist writers is, to separate the Old from the New Testament, in their discussions and controversies respecting this Sacrament. They do not allow the same authority or weight to the declarations of the Old Testament, which they are disposed to attach to those of the New. Still, there can be nothing more certain than the fact that all parts of Scripture are based exactly on the same authority. The Spirit of God speaks to man in every page of the Bible. God selected the purest and most exalted intellects for the indwelling of his Spirit, and thus inspired them for declaring his will to mankind. Every part of Scripture is therefore indited under his heavenly guidance; consequently every passage and declaration in its whole compass have the same authority. It is therefore a great fallacy when enquiring into any theological

subject, to dismiss one part of revelation as irrelevant to the matter in hand, and to admit another part as exclusive evidence. For any passage that may be supposed to throw light upon any point of discussion, be it from the Old Testament or from the New, ought to be admitted as sufficient evidence. It is for this reason that I have attempted, in the foregoing treatise, to illustrate the nature of baptism from that of circumcision. And if I did otherwise I should consider myself subject to blame ; because I divided the word of truth with partiality.

2. Another remarkable fallacy in the reasoning of these writers, consists in the assumption that theirs is the most scriptural Church in the universe, both in point of doctrine and discipline. Now you will be pleased to observe that this is the very point which they labour, in all their controversial writings, to prove and establish. If the Anabaptist Church is really the best and purest, according to the Scripture model, there is little use in disputing about this matter : because, in that case all the others would of course be wrong. But then we want proof for all this,—proof to convince us that the religion of Jesus Christ, and its various blessings, were never properly set forth to the world except through the ministration of the Baptist Church.—This kind of proof I should imagine it impossible for the most zealous of their partizans to produce, either from the word of God, or from the general effect of their discipline upon the morality of the present generation. There is no other source, that I know of, from which such proof can be gathered. And if I do not discover it either in the Bible or in the practical results of the baptist system of faith and discipline, I

am at liberty to conclude that there exists no proof sufficient to shew to the world the absolute superiority of this Church above all others. Hence, to assume that it is the best and purest of all Churches, is a fallacy in reasoning, which the merest tyro in Logic would discover; but which is so disguisedly propounded, that with a great many well meaning people, it carries along with it the force of truth. It is, like other arguments of theirs, "Petitio principii," or begging the question; in other words—*taking for granted the thing to be proved.*

3. A third fallacy of theirs consists in the partial quotation of ancient authors, especially the primitive Fathers of the Church. They appeal to those authors continually for a proof of the antiquity and propriety of immersion in baptism. But with a degree of unfairness, which may perhaps deserve a harsher name than mere fallacy, they withhold every tittle and syllable in those authors which seem to make against their system. For instance, Dr. Gale in his reply to Dr. Wall, endeavours by various arguments to overthrow the authority of those ancient writers, whose works tend to support the fact that infant baptism prevailed in the primitive Church; and is careful to bring into a prominent position those writers who confirm the opinion about immersion. And yet these very writers would have no hesitation, if such doctrines as the baptist Church diffuse were propagated in their time, to denounce them as heresies, and to mark the conduct of their authors with the severest reprehension. There seems to me something extremely inconsistent in the appeal of a baptist writer to the evidence of antiquity. For he appeals to men

who differed from him in every respect, except in the single instance of baptizing by immersion. They differed from him, for instance, in their notions of Church government: for they were either Bishops or presbyters of a church constituted upon apostolical principles. They had their rituals and their prayer books, as may be seen from the learned Dr. Brett's collection of ancient Liturgies. And I have not a doubt that they would pronounce a church, which professed to be an association of men, "voluntarily and understandingly covenanting and embodying together,"* for certain purposes, to be contrary to the evident intention and spirit of the religion which we all receive, and to be dangerous both in its doctrine and practical results. It is therefore a fallacy—a deceiving of themselves—in baptist writers, to suppose that antiquity is on their side.

4. Further: one would imagine from the account which they generally afford us of Pædobaptist writers and commentators, that all who think differently from themselves in religious matters, are extremely inconsistent. To prove this, they bring forward a copious supply of sentences and quotations from the most learned and admired of the Pædobaptist writers, by which they affect to invalidate the authority of infant baptism. For instance, Dr. Whitby, one of the brightest ornaments of the Church of England, is brought forward as a witness in favour of adult baptism. Now you will readily understand that the fallacy here complained of, arises from taking a partial view of the Dr's. opinion, or perhaps from quoting only a sentence instead of a paragraph. But neither of these

* See Articles of the Baptist Church.

can be a true criterion of a man's opinion: we cannot possibly judge of his sentiments on any particular subject or point of Theology from a sentence or two here and there. In order to form a just estimate of his real opinion on such matters, we must look to his practice,—to the manner in which he commonly brought that opinion into a practical bearing. This is the rule which the experience of the world teaches us. And if we apply it to the case of Dr. Whitby, we shall discover his real and deliberate opinion to be very different from what the Baptists would have us believe it to have been. In his practice he was a Pædobaptist, and made use of the offices for infant baptism in the book of common prayer.

5. I confess I do not like the task of exposing these fallacies: and for this reason I would have stopped here, did I not conceive it to be my duty to descant on one or two more of these specious arguments, which, like an ignis fatuus, may lead astray the thoughtless and unwary.

It is a favourite mode with Antipædobaptist writers of supporting a point of Theology by a vast collection of learned men's opinions. They compile as much of such matter on their own side of the question as they conveniently can, and appeal to the united testimony of the whole as proof sufficient to establish any doctrine. This, however, is a very striking fallacy in the course of their argumentations. For it is very well known, and an established truth in theological pursuits, that one thousand opinions do not amount to one fact. The general sense of commentators upon any disputed passage of holy writ, is, I admit, of great weight: but where Scripture is silent or of doubtful meaning, no human authority or opinion can put the

matter beyond the reach of controversy. It is for this reason that the baptist writers cannot prove incontrovertably that adult baptism was the *only* baptism practised in the times of the Apostles. Wherefore it is a decided fallacy in their reasoning, to imagine that a vast multitude of human opinions can amount to one scriptural truth or point of faith. Indeed were we to compromise the matter under discussion by this test, I am of opinion, and I dare say that most of you will join me, that the advantage would decidedly be on our side. For there are a great many more Pædobaptist, than Antipædobaptist writers in the Christian world.

6. Naturally connected with this is another fallacy, which from its subtilty may escape common attention, but which is nevertheless equally dangerous in its results. They take it for granted that example ought in all cases to be the rule for our guidance in matters of ecclesiastical discipline. No doubt example is very valuable where the application of it is clear and undoubted. There are examples to be derived from the conduct and ministerial labours of the Apostles which deserve the close attention of all christians.—But circumstances arise in these modern times, which render necessary a course of action, for which the example of the Apostles affords no precedent. What are we to do then? Are we to remain inactive or indifferent because the conduct of the Apostles affords no precise rule for our guidance? Certainly not: this in a minister of Christ would not be commendable. No: if example cannot be brought from the Scriptures to bear directly upon any particular emergency, we immediately have recourse to the pre-

cept. We endeavour to find out how far such and such an act of discipline or clerical duty may agree or disagree with the chief precepts of the Gospel, and the general tendency of christianity. These are sure guides that will not forsake us in any case.—Hence the rational conclusion is,—that the precept of Scripture is of higher authority than the practice of the Apostles: because their practice must have been founded upon that precept, and modified according to circumstances. And if we apply its conclusion to the case under consideration, we shall readily perceive the manifest logical fallacy of referring to the Acts of the Apostles, for examples as conclusive proof in favour of adult baptism being the only Christian baptism; whilst the general precepts and evident tendency of the Gospel, give us reason to believe that infant baptism is an equally Christian ordinance.

7. Once more: the whole reasoning of Antipædobaptist writers takes it for granted that the Church of Christ is to stand still, and continue in the minutest particulars as it was first constituted under the Apostles. Their mode of argument leads to this supposition: for they are strenuous in their efforts to reduce every thing to the standard of the Apostles, and deny the propriety or justice of altering one tittle on the plea of necessity. Now this is a most remarkable fallacy, and is actually inconsistent with the Spirit of the Gospel, and with their own practices. For if we were to refer to the times and customs of the apostles in every particular,—customs which are acknowledged to have arisen from the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed, we should never build churches, nor form societies for the propagation of

the Gospel among the heathens. For the Apostles had neither. On this principle there could be no convocations as in the church of England, no general assemblies of the Church as in Scotland, no annual associations of members and ministers as observed by other denominations: for to all these the Apostles were strangers. And yet this assembling together of ministers and people, is considered by all denominations a rational and a scriptural mode of promoting that unity and brotherly love which become the followers of the Redeemer. The Baptists themselves acknowledge this: and appear to have no difficulty in reconciling this modern practice with their rigid adherance to the apostolical model. Hence, on their own practical principles, it is a fallacy in argument to suppose that the Christian religion is to be uniformly propagated in all times as it has been in the days of the Apostles.

No: the apostolical precepts and examples are to be adhered to in every instance so far as circumstances will permit; and a departure from them should never be attempted, without sufficient cause and a public decision of the proper authorities of the Church. Thus carefully and cautiously modified, the propagation of the Gospel is, at the present day, conducted in such a manner as to suit the monarchies of Europe, the Republics of America, and the Despotisms of Asia. And this power of arranging the method of diffusion, when exercised by the proper and acknowledged authorities, is undoubtedly of Divine origin: for we have our Saviour's promise that, under all such circumstances, he would be with his Church alway even unto the end of the world. The Gospel therefore from its very nature and tendency must spread;

and provided its heavenly doctrines and precepts be preserved unimpaired, and its saving calls pronounced without disguise, the minor enactments regarding it, which the policy of worldly governments renders necessary, may very safely be trusted to the wisdom of the spiritual rulers of the Church.

I have now, my friends, gone over the most prominent fallacies, which appear to me to be discoverable in the reasoning of baptist writers on the subject of infant baptism. These fallacies are not gathered out of any one writer on their side of the question; but are brought together from the publications of a number of the most celebrated among them. Let me beg of you, in all concern for your spiritual welfare, to weigh them attentively, and think whether or not you see reason for coming to the conclusion which I have all along endeavoured to elucidate. Consider too, the plain arguments which are brought forward and briefly stated in a former section of this address. Reflect well on the scriptural nature of the evidence which I have laid before you, in favour of infant baptism, and on the fallacies which are discoverable in the arguments of those who would oppose that sacred ordinance: then ask yourselves in the fear of God whether or not infant baptism is of divine institution. If you arrive at a conclusion in the affirmative,—as I have little doubt every reflecting mind will readily do,—delay not any longer to bring your children to receive the spiritual benefits of the ordinance. Wait not from day to day, under pretence of digesting the subject in your own minds; but give present heed to it. For it is one of vast importance, and nearly concerns every one of you, not only in so far as it influences the salvation of your offspring, but as it

affects your own responsibility as parents and as Christians. Now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation. Neglect not therefore to avail yourselves of the precious opportunity which it presents to you. Be assured—and I wish to impress this particularly on your minds—be assured that a neglect of this matter may at the last day rise up in judgment against you, as a neglect of a most important duty: but you may be very certain that no danger here or hereafter can attend the performance of it.

To your children you owe a most important duty, both as parents and as christians. They are a trust, as it were, committed to your care, and you cannot surely doubt that to this, as well as to all other trusts of a similiar nature, very great responsibility is attached. In the baptism of infants there is safety;—in the neglect or delay of it, danger and uncertainty.

I will now draw this address towards a conclusion, by briefly noticing two objections or doubts, which I have often heard stated with regard to Infant Baptism.

SECTION 3.

TWO POPULAR OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

Interrogatories to the following effect I have heard repeatedly proposed: First; our Saviour declared—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" what then is the use of baptizing infants when they cannot believe? Secondly: What benefit can children derive from being admitted into the Christian

Church, when they cannot possibly understand christianity? To each of these questions let us now give a due consideration in their order.

1. And first—"What is the use of baptizing infants when they are incapable of faith?"

I answer that our church never for a moment supposes the infant to be capable of faith. She proceeds on the principle that the children of Christian parents are fit subjects for baptism—a principle which is established beyond all controversy by the words of Scripture—and she accordingly examines the Sponsors with regard to the several articles of the Christian faith. In doing so she has the example of the apostles for her guide; she obeys the command of our Lord, making no exception in the baptizing of all nations; and leaves the result in the hands of Providence. Infants then may receive the benefit of an inward and spiritual grace from the application of the outward means. For I suppose it will not be contended, that, because they are incapable of faith, they are therefore unfit to grow in grace.

Again: the objection which the query under consideration implies may be converted into the following syllogism:

Faith precedes baptism:

But children are incapable of faith.

Therefore children are incapable of baptism.

This mode of reasoning is very plausible in the case before us: but extend the principle which it involves to other subjects, and its fallacy will at once be apparent. Try it for instance in its application to the *salvation* of children, and it leads exactly to the same consequence; namely, the impossibility of

their being saved. Hence the syllogism is absurd, and therefore incorrect. But here it is:—

Faith precedes salvation;

But infants are incapable of faith:

Therefore infants are incapable of salvation.

Here, to speak according to the language of logicians, the error lies in the major proposition, "faith precedes salvation." The error consists in its not being a universal truth. It is very true that faith generally precedes salvation; but to affirm this in the case of infants, would be to deny the exercise of one of the most benevolent attributes of God; namely, his mercy. The conclusion, therefore, to which this process of reasoning leads us is incorrect, because it is opposed to an acknowledged truth.

"But," as an acute reasoner* observes, "will any one affirm, that because in our Lord's commission the word '*believeth*,' goes before the word '*saved*,' therefore all who die in infancy, and who are consequently incapable of this faith, must inevitably perish? The argument founded on the order of the words, is equally conclusive against salvation as against baptism. But if children are capable of salvation without faith, why are they not capable of baptism without it too? If they are capable of admission into the church in heaven without it, why should they not be admitted into the Church of Christ on earth by baptism? It is indeed admitted that in the case of adults, faith must precede baptism as well as salvation? faith in their case is necessary to both; but in the case of children it is not necessary to either."

This is very clear. But in truth our church does

*Stanley on Baptism, p. 13.

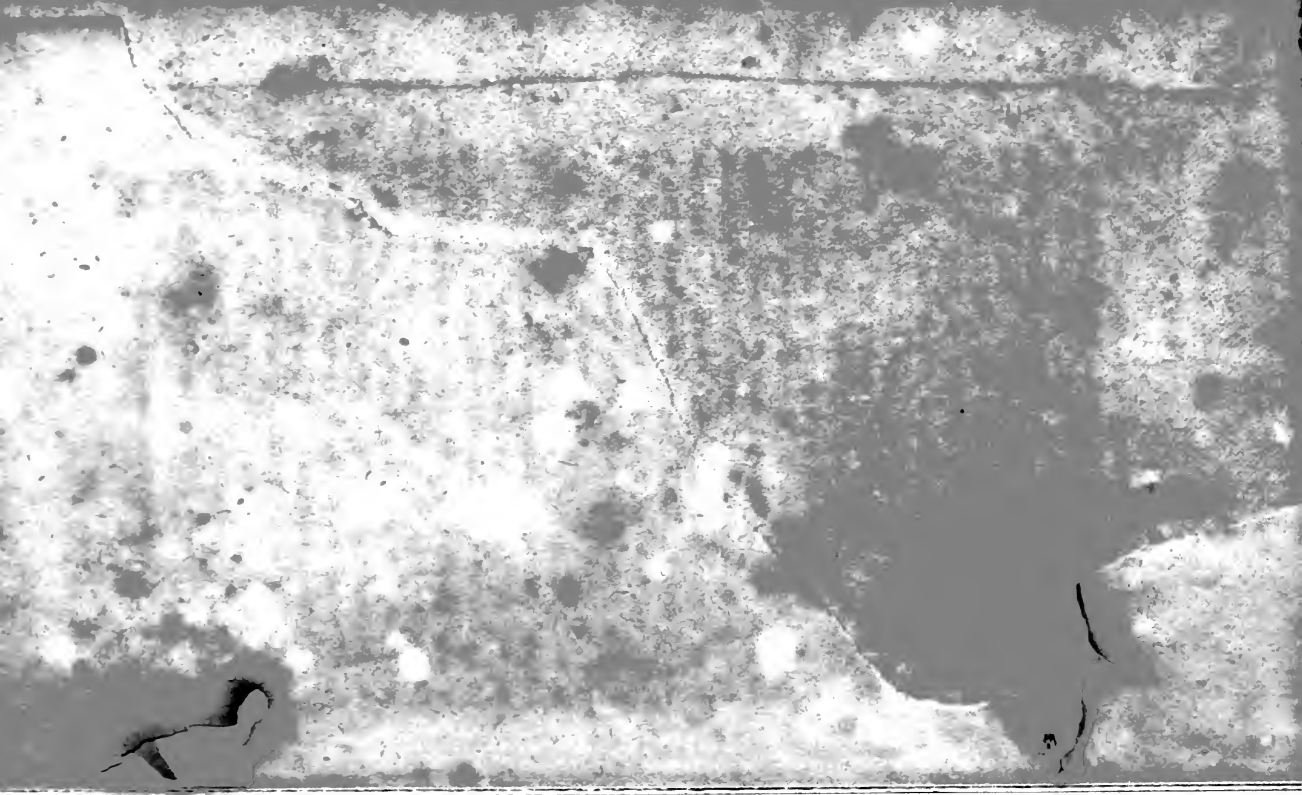
not violate the principle here contended for. In every instance faith must precede her baptismal ordinance. Adults declare their faith for themselves; sponsors declare it for infants.

2. But then, although children may in this way be baptized without being capable of making a declaration of faith, you may still be supposed to ask—What benefit can infants derive from being members of the church of God; incapable as they confessedly are of understanding christianity, and of being influenced by its doctrines or precepts?

To this I answer, much every way. By entering the Church of Christ in infancy, they are ready at the earliest dawn of reason to imbibe the spirit of the Gospel, and to receive instruction in the wisdom of that heavenly master whom they profess to serve. The visible Church on earth is the preparatory state, in which men become fit for entering the Church triumphant in heaven. The span of human life, at the longest, cannot afford too much time for this great preparation. The sooner it is begun, therefore, the better, and the greater chance there is that it may terminate in the happiest results.

"In baptism," to use the words of the writer just quoted, "we are at once dedicated to the service of God, and admitted into the school of Christ, that we may be placed under a course of Christian instruction and discipline. Not that baptism saves us, any more than admission into a scientific institution makes us learned: but as the latter is the way to become learned, so the former is the way to be made wise unto salvation."

Let me affectionately exhort you, therefore, my friends, to consider these things with mature reflec-

tion. Consider well; and view the case in all its bearings; lest that, by resting your plea for delaying to bring your children to God in baptism, you may be leaning upon a broken reed, which may soone or later pierce your hand, and leave you pain a trouble instead of, as you expected, spiritual supp and comfort. Forget not at any time that rel is a plant of slow growth, and requires muc and attention in order to bring it into a s vigorous strength. It is like a mustard seed, the least of all seeds, but which in time will and flourish; exercising a wholesome influe every feeling, and passion, and affection, of t heart. Lose no time, therefore, in contrib share of labour and attention in order to promising seed in the infant minds of your Let no reason or argument, however pla your thoughts from the praisew member that by delay you ris the salvation of your which, as Christia owe to them. satisfaction thing in that t t

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